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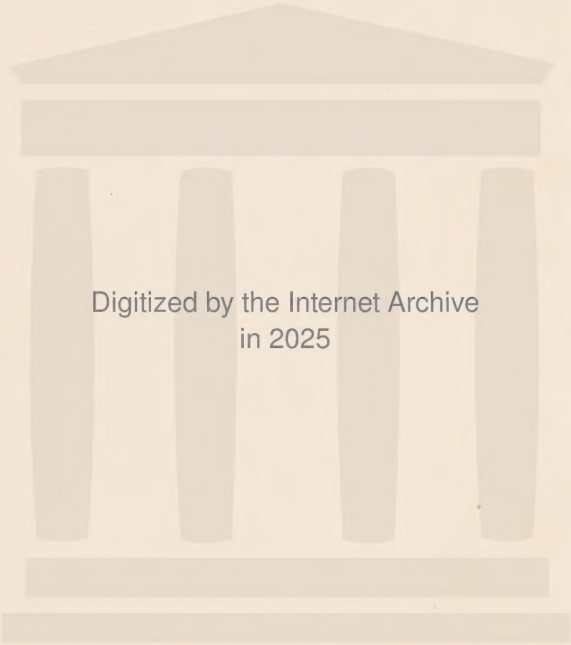
written by Catharine Booth
afterwards Mrs J. S. Stuart
& mother of James Stuart

WALTER DEVERELL.



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WALTER DEVERELL.

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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WALTER DEVERELL.

CHAPTER I.

On the morning which was appointed for the execution of Gabriel Marmot, the streets and windows commanding a view of the guillotine were crowded with spectators, eager to witness the scene; for, in Paris as in London, there is always to be found a numerous class of the idle and curious; many who would rather do violence to their own better feelings, than miss the excitement and novelty of such spectacles.

In this instance, however, their curiosity remained ungratified; for news was brought that the criminal was respited, until some extraordinary circumstances, since disclosed, should be fully investigated and brought to light.

Our reader will of course be at no loss to guess the circumstances alluded to, although we do not think it necessary to tire him with the details of proceedings, legal or otherwise, that

can be of no interest in any case but to the parties concerned. Sufficient to say, the innocence of the prisoner being most solemnly attested by one whose word was deemed worthy of attention, the authorities judged proper to suspend the execution of the sentence until further proof might be elicited; yet, strange to say, nothing further could be obtained. The simple but solemn attestation of innocence was all that could be given as proof. The question was, could that assertion be taken as sufficient reason for retracting the sentence? Certainly not, but it was a puzzling case, and the authorities suspended proceedings to consider it. Walter Deverell, (an Englishman by birth, wealthy, of good parentage, but recently arrived at Paris, and in no way even acquainted with the person of the prisoner, and actuated by no motive that could be discovered,) made solemn oath and protest that the prisoner was innocent of the crime for which he was condemned to die. What was his means of knowing? Did he then know who was the murderer? Yes, he knew, but was bound by oath not to declare it. He had his reasons for not doing so. It was useless to question him, for he was resolved; and had made up his mind rather to suffer death himself than declare his secret. Surely was he himself the guilty man? at least that was sug-

gested by some of the lawyers who examined him. Not a wonderful conclusion. For what could be his motive for refusing to disclose the author of such a deed, unless he was the guilty person or an accomplice? A firm but simple denial was all that could be obtained from him, even in reply to that accusation. The question was next started, where was he on the night of the murder? On that night, the fifteenth of September, Walter recollected that he had taken an evening walk, which he had prolonged much later than usual, as he had gone to various parts of the city. It was twelve o'clock at night nearly before he returned to his lodgings, and he was alone.

His questioners looked at each other significantly, and his statement was taken down in writing. He was remanded to prison until further inquiries should be made. On the next day he underwent pretty much the same cross-examination, with the addition of a few questions more. A witness too was produced, whom Walter recognized to be the baker who had sold him the bread and wine; for which he had called again and duly paid him. This man stated his knowledge of Walter, who, he said, had called at his shop under extraordinary circumstances; and he related, with precise accuracy, the details already known to our reader. When Walter

paid him for the articles, he had left his address: and from that period the baker had supplied him with bread. On the night that he came to the shop, he appeared much agitated, and stated that the bread and wine was for a poor woman living in —— alley, Rue ———. The well-known infamy of that place caused the man to suggest that there might be fitter objects of charity, but, as no remark was made, he had never heard any more of the matter, until, learning the statement which was now made, he came forward to give all the evidence he knew that might possibly throw light on the subject.

This evidence *did* throw a new light into the minds of the judges, or rather confirmed a suspicion already formed. It was known that the sister of Marmot lived in that alley, and, on inquiry, it was found that she had not been heard of since the night of the circumstance stated by the last witness. On questioning and summoning the woman of the house, she swore positively to Walter's having been there that night, on which, she said, the female had quitted her lodging. On all this being stated to Walter Deverell, much to the surprise of every one, he owned it was the truth. He proceeded to detail the circumstances which gave rise to these facts. His listeners listened with attention and curiosity, but with utter incredulity. Indeed, it

was not to be expected that such an extraordinary tale would gain credit, under even less suspicious circumstances. The second examination ended, like the first, in his being again remanded until further evidence could be adduced. Remanded, under the suspicion of murder!

It will be better conceived than described, the state of our hero's mind under these circumstances,—the feelings of any innocent person accused of a crime from which nature revolts with horror. But what must be the conflicting emotions of one who is possessed of the power of vindicating himself, while every feeling of his nature forbids him to avail himself of that power.

Walter was generous. No human being would have sacrificed more than he did for the sake of honour, of the affection of those who were dear to him. But who can wonder though his resolution failed him at such a crisis,—though, for a moment, he felt almost impelled to disclose all, and clear himself of the fearful imputation, even at the sacrifice of his friend. Once, in the solitude of his cell, at the hour of midnight, that thought occurred to him. He resolved to declare all; but the morrow came. The cheering beams of the sun shone bright through his grated window. Even in his prison he felt its

genial warmth glow on his heart. The pure consciousness of innocence strengthened his roused spirits; and his resolution again revived more firmly than before.

"I am innocent," thought he. "None whose opinion I value can doubt that I am so. What boots this temporary suspicion, which facts will sooner or later clear away?" The image of Travers recurred to his mind. He recalled him as he once seemed to his eyes in their first friendship, which, though of brief duration, was strongly linked with his affections; young, gay, talented, and warm-hearted. He recalled him as he last beheld him, grovelling at his feet, and imploring for mercy, to be saved from a death of infamy and horror. It is true that by his crime he had merited that death; but was the friend on whom he had relied to become his executioner?—the friend to whom, prompted by despair and remorse, he had confessed his guilt. Was he to betray him, and point him out for the vengeance of man, to be hurried into the eternity which his guilt rendered so terrible? No, no, it must not be. At least the heart of Walter was not nerved for such a step.

One solace alone cheered his solitude, which must otherwise have been spent in painful converse with his own reflections. One companion alone sought his dreary habitation, and strove

to enliven it by the soothing efforts of affection. Need it be told, that companion was Lewis? Yet, strange to say, much as Walter loved that gentle youth, and much as he esteemed the value of his kindness, there were moments in which he would have preferred solitude. It is always irksome to be in company with one from whom you wish to conceal the thoughts which are passing in your mind; and, although Lewis forbore to question him, Walter felt that he must naturally be anxious to know the truth of his extraordinary secret. The consciousness that he must keep that knowledge concealed from him, rendered their conversation constrained, and sometimes irksome. The idea which was for ever present to Walter's thoughts, was that which he must not impart to his companion, whose efforts to amuse him, with other subjects, were an interruption to his ideas, or an intrusion on his secret cogitations.

Many days elapsed in fruitless inquiries and profitless examinations, for no evidence could be produced to implicate our hero; while, at the same time, as little appeared to prove the truth of his assertion with respect to the innocence of Marmot, who still remained under sentence of death, though a temporary respite was granted. The judges were at a loss how to proceed, and the case was referred to the will of the king,

whose mandate was to decide whether the prisoner ought to suffer his sentence, or be reprieved. It was decided. Marmot was doomed to die. Such was the will of the king; such was approved of by the authorities. If any individual in his own private thoughts disapproved of this decision, he did not venture to express himself, as no proof could be brought capable of opposing a just verdict, or one deemed just by such authority. The judges themselves, independent of all due submission to the royal will, and the belief of the wisdom of their former decision, had their own private reasons for approving of the resolve. The jury and many shrewd lawyers argued with each other, that to submit the prisoner to his sentence, was the only means of extracting any further confession or information from the singularly obstinate attestor of his innocence, whose motives, whatever they were, seemed to be merely a wish to save the prisoner's life; which, when he saw there was no other means of doing, would prompt him to divulge all.

Could these judges have seen the secret thoughts of our hero's mind, they would have felt more than ever convinced of the wisdom of this plan.

Ten days had passed since Walter's first examination and consequent incarceration, ten

anxious and perplexing days, and nine sleepless nights. On the evening of the tenth day he felt more than usually exhausted. That day had been spent in perfect inaction of body and a restless fever of anxiety, in which the spirit was agitated too strongly for the tenement which imprisoned it. Perplexed and annoyed by the long examinations and cross-questionings, to which he had been subjected on the previous days, one would almost think that a day of peace, even in the cell of a prison, would have been comparative happiness. Peace—ha! how they mistake that word, who apply it to the mere rest of the body or the absence of external annoyances. In the mind alone it is to be found. On the mind alone does its existence depend. Place man amid pleasures. Surround him with all that can charm the eye or delight the heart, it boots not. Set but his passions at work, and his soul is the seat of eternal war. In the mind of Walter a thousand conflicting emotions strove incessantly for precedence. At one moment he was firmly resolved on one mode of action; the next and a crowd of overwhelming feelings changed every project, rendering the former resolves impossible, and framed others to be as rapidly destroyed; for his emotions ever varying, presented all things in different lights,

as quickly as he could summon them to his reflections.

This had been a long and weary day. Even the efforts of poor Lewis had failed to distract his attention for one moment from his torturing thoughts; and, tired out with fruitless attempts to amuse his friend, the poor youth had relapsed into the same gloomy silence, and, seating himself in a remote corner of the cell, gave himself up to despondency and inaction. Walter did not seek to cheer him; indeed, he scarcely noticed his presence. He paced the narrow limits of his apartment with hurried and unequal steps, until the darkness of night rendered that exercise impossible, when, flinging himself on his pallet bed, he lay absorbed in thoughts as gloomy as the darkness of his cell.

He was roused by the appearance of the turnkey, who always visited the cells at that hour to inspect them before retiring for the night; and as the light of the lamp which the man carried glared full on our hero's face, he started up with an exclamation of irritation at the intrusion.

"I beg pardon, young gentleman," said the turnkey, with a grin, "sorry I disturbed your nap; but I've brought you good news, so you must forgive me, as it's the last time I'll need to trouble you."

Walter made no remark, though the man paused in evident expectation of his doing so, and then proceeded—

"I fancy you have heard, sir, that this matter is settled? You will be free to leave this lodging to-morrow."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Walter, who had not before attended to his remarks.

"Mean! What, haven't they sent to tell you? The king has settled all matters. Marmot is to be executed to-morrow, and no more bother about it; and you are to be discharged scot free. I dare say you are glad to get off from the scrape. My advice to you is not to run any more such risks, as another time you may not be so lucky; but I wish you joy in this instance. Good night, sir."

And without giving him time to reply, the man retired, closing the door after him. He had fulfilled his instructions, which were to relate the fact to Walter in a manner the most likely to excite an effect on his feelings, and leave the result to itself and his conscience. Had he remained to witness the effect of his information, he would have seen little to gratify his curiosity or to afford food for repetition to his employers. It is true, the news fell like a thunderbolt on the ears of Walter; but he uttered no exclamation and betrayed no signs of emo-

tion. It curdled his very blood; but it could not astonish and did not agitate him. His mind had already gone through every conflicting emotion in the tortures of long suspense; and this fearful decision, though it blasted all hope, struck the final blow to his doubts and misery.

Nothing is more agonising than suspense—the torturing vibration between hope and fear. The certainty—the actual infliction of the dreaded evil, is a comparative relief; even as the mortification of the frame, which, though certain death, is hailed by the sufferer as a relief from his agony. Thus Walter felt when he calmly listened to the doom which set at rest all future hope or anxiety. All was over. No alternative now remained, but to declare all or suffer Marmot to die. He could no longer dream of any other possible means of saving him. Even the sacrifice of his own life would not be accepted. Fame and honour had already been sacrificed in vain. Marmot was to die, and nothing remained for Walter, but tamely to suffer the life of an innocent man to be sacrificed, or save it by the sacrifice of another—that other his friend. "Out on his weak and coward heart!" the reader may well say; "wherefore hesitate to surrender to justice such a worthless villain?" Ay, wherefore, indeed! But the actions and feelings of our nature cannot be questioned on points of

reason. Walter remained as if transfixed to the spot, standing in the same position as he stood when he heard the fearful decision, when he was startled from his mental catalepsy by the sudden emotion of Lewis, who, unable to restrain his joy at the news which pronounced his friend at freedom, advanced, and throwing his arms round him, in a tone of delighted affection expressed his satisfaction at the unexpected event. Walter started. The tones of that affectionate voice smote on his heart as the sting of an adder—the accents of joy at an event which had plunged him deeper in despair! With fierce and unwonted violence, he shook off the proffered embrace, and spurning him away, burst from his grasp, with a frenzied curse. Terrified and weeping, Lewis fell at his feet, and clasping his knees, clung to him with fear and anguish. It was but the frenzy of a moment. That voice—those tears recalled Walter to reason and feeling, which for a moment had deserted him. He raised the weeping boy, and in accents more kind and tender than ever, entreated his forgiveness and mercy.

"Yes, have mercy on me, dear Lewis!" he exclaimed. "I have indeed need of your compassion. Forgive me, for my brain is burning. I know not what I do. Approach me not. Leave me. For mercy's sake, do not seek to

reason with me. Reason is no longer in my power, and madness may impel me to utter that which would make me hate myself."

This was a fearful night. Volumes could not contain the details of the varied and torturing emotions which passed through the mind of our hero, during eight hours that elapsed from the time that he received the final mandate until the following morning, when day brought the last trial which was to terminate all. What was his final resolve remains to be proved in the sequel. Alas! until then it is difficult to say whether he knew it himself. Let those who are inclined to judge harshly blame him for want of resolution; for, if we disclosed what he secretly determined, whatever it might be, it would not be approved of by every hearer.

At six o'clock Walter was visited by two men, who, without saying a word in explanation, desired him to accompany them. Walter obeyed almost mechanically, for the summons was wholly unexpected, and his conductors respectfully led the way through a long passage, which terminated in a door leading to the room, where Walter had been examined on the former occasions. The door was opened on a signal; and, on entering, our hero found himself in the midst of the justice-hall. It was a large and spacious apartment. The feeble light of a winter morning

beamed pale and cheerless through the long and gothic windows; while the glare of torches, ranged along the walls, contrasted in a red and lurid gleam with the imperfect light from without, and shed a gloomy, indistinct ray on the figures and solemn countenances of assembled personages, who, ranged in due precedence of their civil authority, sat or stood around in awful silence.

To Walter's unprepared mind, this assembly seemed a mystery. He was ignorant of its purpose. Apart from all, in the midst of the chamber, stood one whose fettered limbs and downcast glance showed too plainly *his* errand there. Walter had never before seen Marmot; but he was at no loss to guess that it was he. There was no time for surmise. The chief judge,—the same who had pronounced sentence on the wretched culprit,—rose, and a death-like stillness reigned around, as with solemn tone he uttered the following words:—

"I call on all here assembled to listen and attest. The prisoner, Gabriel Marmot, stands condemned to die. One hour hence, and he perishes on the scaffold. Let his soul answer to his Maker for the crime for which he suffers. The judgment of the assembled authorities have declared him guilty of murder, therefore in justice he must die, unless proof can be brought to pronounce

him innocent. There is one present who declares him such, but his simple assertion cannot be taken to annul the just doom of man and Heaven. Walter Deverell, stand forward! We call on you, in the name of God and your salvation; yonder stands the doomed man, look on him, face to face; it is for you to declare the proofs of his innocence, or behold him perish before you."

Walter did stand forward. With a firm step and resolute mien he approached the bench, where sat the solemn conclave. For a moment his quick glance dwelt on the prisoner. The sunken eye of the wretched man met his with a look which implored mercy, and gleamed with a ray of hope. Walter heeded it not. An hour before, and that look might have decided him; but his resolution was already taken.

"My Lords and Judges," he began, when a confused murmur ran through the assembly, which obliged him to pause. A commotion followed at the further end of the room, at which was a door leading to without, from which the culprit was to pass for execution. All eyes were turned in that direction; all, save those of the prisoner. He heard it not, nor heeded it. His sunken eye, wild with despair, was fixed on Walter. His thoughts, agitated and awakened with the unlooked for hope, were

centred alone in the object which seemed to promise salvation. The pause, the interruption of Walter's address was all he felt or knew. The cause of that interruption he knew not, nor sought to know. With outstretched neck, his fettered hands raised, and every feature distended with eagerness; he remained in breathless suspense, with his eyes starting from their sockets, fixed on the man whose next word was to pronounce his salvation or doom.

Suddenly the door burst open, as if impelled by violence from without. The officials who guarded it started back aghast, as loud shouts were heard from the street; and, suddenly emerging from a throng of persons, who surrounded the door on the outside, a female appeared, and bursting through the assembled guards, who in vain attempted to drive her back, she rushed into the midst of the room, flew towards the prisoner, and throwing herself on his bosom, shrieked aloud, "He is innocent! I come to surrender the murderer." At the first glance, Walter recognized the female with whom his mysterious encounter has been already related. Astonished, and even awe-struck, the judges sat mute and motionless. Even the armed guards forgot their post in amazement, and no longer repelled the mob, who, rapidly gaining entrance, pressed forward with shouts of

"Save the prisoner, he is innocent! drag the murderer to justice! here with him! let him suffer his punishment! to the scaffold with the wretch!" and a thousand other incoherent shouts of triumph and vengeance. It was in vain that the chief judge rose and waved for silence. His voice could not be distinguished amid the universal uproar, which waxed louder and louder, until one individual from among them shouted,—

"The murderer; seek the murderer."

"Yes, yes," shouted a thousand echoing voices, "let us seek for the guilty wretch, and drag him to instant death."

No sooner said than done. The actions of the mob when roused, like the waves of the sea, are swayed by the slightest word. In an instant the multitude, which pressed forward, crowding the chamber to suffocation, hurried as eagerly to quit it and, dispersing with wild and deafening yells, spread far and wide, impelled by one strong and universal motive. Their shouts died away in the distant streets; and the astonished and almost stupified assembly looked around in silent amazement.

"My lords and merciful judges," exclaimed the female, who, during the scene of tumult, had clung with wild but firm embrace to the prisoner, but now advanced with bold step towards the bench where the judges sat:—

"Hear me;—the prisoner is innocent! so is he who stands before you,—he who has risked fame and honour to save a wretch who possesses none. Marmot is innocent! In a few minutes the murderer will be brought before you. Let him deny his crime if he dares. He has already confessed it to me, and to that youth whose generosity alone made him hesitate to deliver up to justice a wretch whose art had won his friendship. I hesitated also, though from motives less pure. The slave of my own sinful passions, I became the tool of him who had excited them. I aided in the concealment of the crime, but I knew not who was to be the sufferer for it. The seducer is ever dear to his victim, even after scorn and cruelty had taught her that he is a villain. I loved him; for his sake I could have consented that an innocent man should suffer, but God willed otherwise. The selected victim was my brother, and for him nature calls aloud too strongly in my heart. Hark! do you not hear these approaching shouts? They sound of triumph; they have found him. I pointed out the track. In a few moments they will bring him hither, and I will tell my tale face to face with him, and dare him to deny it."

The shouts of an advancing multitude now again sounded from without. Nearer and nearer, and the yells of triumph approached the very door.

"Let them enter," said the chief justice; and guards stood back in all directions.

Walter felt his head grow dizzy, and his heart sick, as he beheld the well known form of Charles Travers, half dragged, half carried, amid a number of infuriated and triumphant men, who bore him forward amid hootings and execrations, towards the assembled judges. His eye caught Walter's as he passed, and he made a vain effort to extend his hand towards him, but was hurried on. Even at that fearful moment, when the surrounding scene of tumult and horror drove every idea into a confused chaos, Walter inwardly blessed Heaven, which had saved him, by this dreadful but unlooked-for event, from being the instrument of the wretched man's destruction.

"Unhand him. Let him stand alone," said the chief judge, raising his voice to a tone of thunder. "Justice shall have its course; but death awaits whoever offers violence to its mandates."

The mob drew back, awed by the command. The few who had forcibly kept their hold of Travers now relinquished it, and stepped aside. The guards instantly advanced; and, one standing on each side of the wretched man, led him towards the bench. This precaution was unnecessary. The miserable culprit was evidently resigned to his fate, and his wasted exhausted

frame could have offered no resistance. He glanced round the assembled multitude with wild and glassy stare, and his haggard and distorted features bore the stamp of hopeless and reckless despair. His wandering eye at length rested on the woman who stood at a short distance from him.

"Speak," said he, in a broken and hollow voice. "Speak—wherefore hesitate? I am prepared to reply."

"Wretch!" exclaimed she, advancing with flashing eyes, and raised voice; "dare you deny your guilt? Here, before this assemblage, I take man and Heaven to witness my truth, while I brand you for a murderer."

"Well, proceed with your accusation. No need for such witnesses. Tell your tale, and I shall reply to it."

"My tale need not be long. Charles Travers, I appeal to your own guilty conscience to attest its truth. Five months ago, on the 15th of last September, when I quitted my desolate lodging, in quest of food, or money, by which I might purchase it to my famishing infant—that infant, which is since dead, was your child; and though bitter experience had taught me that you were callous to my sufferings, I still trusted that one spark of nature might be in you towards your own helpless offspring. You had promised

to give me some money, and of course, as usual, you failed in your promise; but, I thought, if I could find you, and represent my utter destitution, you might be moved to grant a little relief. I knew your lodgings, and, late in the evening, I proceeded there. I chose the darkness of night, that I might not be recognised by any one who might taunt you with my disgrace and degradation. My intention was to obtain an interview with you, as a mere beggar, and only in private to appeal to your feelings. Yes, wretch that I was, I crouched before the scorn of the world, and feared to claim mercy from my destroyer, lest the sin and shame, caused by himself, should contaminate his honour. Such a wretch I was—but such is every woman who suffers sinful passion to sway her soul from the stern reason of virtue. I sought your lodgings in darkness and sorrow, to crave a pittance to support the existence which you had rendered wretched and worthless. I found you not. I was repulsed from your door, but I knew your wonted haunts. Vice and misery had made me familiar with them, and I felt no hesitation in seeking you, even amid scenes of sin and infamy. I knew the gaming-house where you spent the most part of your evenings. Thither I proceeded, and being well-known by the door-keeper, received an answer to my questions. You

were there, but would not likely come out until daybreak. No matter—I could wait. In fact, I had no alternative; and hunger knows no law. I waited. I saw all! Look in my face!—do you remember the dark narrow passage which leads to that hell of infamy? It was dark, and you did not see me, for I concealed myself in the shadow of the wall. I saw you steal out—look cautiously and eagerly round, and then take your station at the entrance, where the niche of the wall concealed you. I felt at first impelled to advance and address you; but a thought struck me that you were there for some fearful purpose. I hesitated, and had not long to consider, when another person approached—a man, who entered the passage, and passed on in the direction of the street. Need I say further?—does not your guilty soul call on you to tell the rest? Can you deny what followed? With fierce and sudden spring the lurking murderer seized on his victim. The death grapple followed; but it was short and sure. I saw the strangled wretch fall at your feet a corpse. I saw you proceed to your work of plunder. You bent over your victim. I stood forward. I called on your name. You looked up—saw me, and knew me—but your work was done. You fled from the spot; and re-entered the gaming-house—I might have followed you and proclaimed the

deed. The money—the bank notes, and gold, taken from the person of the murdered man, would have been ample evidence of your guilt. But I forbore; my blood curdled at the enormity of your crime;—but I had loved you. You had wronged, ruined, and spurned me; but your blood flowed in the veins of my child, and my nature shrunk from the thought. That child is dead!—dead of want, cold, and starvation. Do you not remember the fearful night when I spurned your proffered gold, and told you that I knew you were a murderer?—did you deny it then? No; pale and guilt-stricken, you could only mutter curses, and leave me to die. Hunger was strong within me, but I shuddered at allaying its pangs with the price of blood. Wretch that I was, I had not suffered enough. The time came when I would have been less scrupulous. My child moaned long with hunger. It died—and I saw it die. Yet I suffered in silence, for I would not betray him who had left me thus to suffer. Is that not true?—did I not keep your secret? On the fearful night when my child expired, I wandered the streets, and in imploring accents besought the relief which I had refused from you. I found one pitying heart that listened to my complaint. Yonder noble and generous youth, who here stands implicated by his friendship for you, in this vile

deed. He bestowed all and more than I sought; but it came too late to save my child. He had quitted the house to bring succour to me, when you visited me unexpectedly to renew your offers of mercy. You encountered him on the stairs, and succeeded in passing unobserved, though you recognised him. Dread of discovery made you fear another interview between him and me. On your knees you besought me to fly instantly, or all would be lost. *I* had lost all; but strange to say, though you had caused my misery, I clung to you in my despair, as the last hope of existence. I fled with you.

"Since then removed to a distance, I have remained concealed, and in ignorance of what has passed since. You trusted to my faith, which had already been sufficiently tried, in the previous examinations I had undergone; in which I had suffered my brother to be suspected rather than betray you. But I trusted that he was beyond the reach of all danger. You had repeatedly assured me he was so. I relied on that, and well knowing that mere suspicion could not injure one who was already sunk below the world's bare opinion, I cared not, so that he was uninjured and you saved. But removed to a distance, I was kept in careful ignorance of his capture and trial. Accident alone brought the news of his condemnation to my ears. Wretch

that I was!—guilty and degraded creature that I am!—this was too much, too black for the nature of humanity. Gabriel, the brother of my infancy, the only being whose blood flowed in nature to mine;—he who shared the same womb with me, entered existence at the same hour!—and smiled and loved me, ere either of us knew grief or sin. No, no, my passion was strong for my seducer; it had overpowered my better reason; it could triumph over virtue, truth, and honour; but the tie of nature and blood was stronger. I could not bear it; frenzied and desperate, I wildly proclaimed the truth even before I paused to reason on its consequences. It is done,—I cannot recall it. I appeal to Heaven to witness my truth, as it witnesses my despair. Gabriel Marmot is innocent. Charles Travers is a murderer."

She ceased. We have given the recital as nearly as possible in her own words; but it would have been vain to have attempted to give colouring to the various emotions which, from time to time, overpowering her resolution, interrupted the thread of her tale. Her feelings can be conceived, but not described. What would be the feelings of any human being in such a situation? It is true, Hester Marmot was a degraded being. Yet though sin and misery may harden the heart, they cannot entirely change the nature of hu-

manity. She had loved Charles Travers. Ay, love can exist even in the bosom of the abandoned and the outcast!—where is the woman, lost though she may be to all virtue or shame, who has not once loved? Nature bound her by the ties of blood to her brother. The impulse of affection and despair had prompted her to attest the truth, which alone could rescue him from a scaffold. She madly rushed to save her brother, heedless of the result to aught else or herself. The deed was done,—the words were uttered. Marmot was saved, but Travers must die. "Charles Travers is a murderer." These last words no sooner passed her lips, than they were echoed by a yell of vengeance from the surrounding multitude. Vengeance in its fiercest fury rang on her ear. Vengeance which called for the blood of the devoted wretch whom her avowal had betrayed. Travers was a murderer, as such he must die on the scaffold. Her eyes glared wildly around, then rested for a moment on the victim whose confession she had scarcely a moment before dared and demanded; and uttering a shrill and piercing cry, she fell senseless to the ground.

All eyes, which would have naturally been attracted to the wretched woman, were turned towards the prisoner Travers, who at that moment moved forward, as if intending to

address the assembled judges. The guards who surrounded him, motioned as with the intent of restraining him.

"Off, stand back," said he in a tone of authority, while with a smile of derision he added, "What! amid a multitude eager for my life's blood, need you deem it requisite to fetter a single step? Direct your fears to my accuser. There she lies; bind and restrain her lest she recover. She has shown a bolder spirit than mine. But touch me not; brief space remains for *my* declaration, and I call on all around to witness it."

A confused murmur or groan of dissatisfaction ran through the crowd. "To the scaffold with the villain," cried several voices, "to the scaffold instantly. He would deny his guilt, but he shall not be listened to." The repeated command of the chief judge again imposed silence, and he desired the prisoner to speak. Walter pressed eagerly forward, and endeavoured to approach the side of his friend. His heart was touched. He felt impelled to grasp the hand of the devoted and wretched being, whose friendless and fearful situation pleaded pity even for his crime, in the heart of one who had known and loved him before this awful crisis.

But the bayonets of the guards were presented, and intercepted his advance. The motion was,

nevertheless, observed by Travers, whose dim and hollow eye was fixed for a moment with a look of kindness on his friend as he spoke :—

"A few words will suffice for my confession. I plead guilty."

A shout followed this brief speech, which was delivered in a firm and audible voice. He paused till silence succeeded, and he pursued.

"Every word that woman has spoken is truth. Her tale was long enough, I need not recapitulate it. I am ready to stand my doom. Lead me to the scaffold, and I meet my death without reluctance; but for you," and here he turned towards Walter who, in spite of the surrounding soldiers, had pressed near to the circle where he stood, "for you, Walter Deverell, I cannot atone for my crime towards you. Noble, generous friend, you did not betray me; could your efforts have saved me, I still had escaped my doom. Heaven, which alone can estimate the generosity of your conduct, has saved you from the inevitable necessity of becoming the accuser of your unworthy friend. He asks not *your* forgiveness; a heart like yours needs no such appeal; and Heaven, which witnesses, will reward your noble conduct. Farewell! No, not to you,—*you* will not abandon me; and your last prayer,—your last adieu on the scaffold will plead my pardon to God."

He ceased,—for a moment he made an effort to grasp Walter's hand, which was extended towards him; but the shouts which again burst from the mob caused the soldiery to close, and form a phalanx round him to defend their prisoner from the violence of the populace. At a signal from one of the authorities a door was thrown open, which led to the interior of the prison; and the guards hurried, or rather carried their prisoner through it, which was instantly closed after them. A shout, or rather yell of disappointed vengeance, burst from the people.

"He has escaped, the villain has fled,—follow him, drag him to justice, to instant death," yelled a thousand voices, as with a simultaneous rush they advanced to the door, which, in spite of the efforts of the guards to restrain them, they commenced to attack with a violence which must soon have terminated in a forcible entrance.

At this moment Walter sprung forward in the midst of the crowd; and seizing the arm of the principal ringleader, he addressed the whole in a loud and firm voice:—

"My friends, what means this violence? Is this the spirit of justice? No, it is revenge—and the most cowardly kind of revenge, which would prompt men to seek to wreak their fury on a wretched criminal whom the laws and justice of his country must inevitably destroy. Let the

scaffold have its victim. Would free citizens and humane men seek to become the executioners of a criminal? or persist in hurrying to eternity a wretch who has not had time to repent his crime? Shame on the mad impulse! Leave the murderer to his doom. Have you no better and nobler motive? Look yonder at the rescued prisoner—the man whose justly-attested innocence has been proved to all. Yet yonder you let him stand fettered,—bound as a malefactor and a murderer; wherefore not release him from these degrading chains, and by restoring him to liberty, with the hands of his assembled countrymen, prove your conviction of his proclaimed innocence?"

This was enough. This address acted like a magic spell on the many-minded multitude, all governed by one desire,—the fury of excitement, which only required an object, and cared not what it might be. This proposal turned the tide of feeling so fiercely excited; and by giving a new and strong motive, turned aside the tumult to another course. The murderer was forgotten. Triumph succeeded to revenge; and the populace surrounding Marmot, proceeded to knock off the fetters which bound him; and lifting him high in air, with deafening shouts, bore him aloft from the precincts of the hall into the open street. Where was Walter amid this scene of

tumult? He had disappeared. A shout of "Vive le brave Anglois," which had echoed on all sides at the conclusion of his speech, followed by the cries of "Crown him, proclaim his generosity; carry him in triumph with Marmot," had smote on the heart of our hero with feelings of dread, little short of those which the former yells of vengeance had inspired. He lost not a moment in making his escape from a scene, the cause of which was too fearful to bear the thoughts of sharing and joining, far less of being the object of any public spectacle of triumph. He hurried from the assembly. His retreat was precipitate; and before it could be prevented or discovered, in the general tumult, he had fled.

CHAPTER II.

Once more, for the last time, we must claim our reader's attention to the wretched Travers, whose crime renders him unworthy of their sympathy; but for the sake of our hero, who did not desert his wretched and guilty friend, we must lead our less devoted or more indifferent reader to the condemned cell of the murderer.

It was late at night, beyond the hour when the cells of all the prisoners are closed for the night, when Walter, after several fruitless applications, at length obtained permission to pay a visit to the dungeon of the culprit, who had been removed to a solitary cell to await the result of his trial, which was to take place on the following day, on the evidence of that morning. There remained not a shadow of doubt that he would be found guilty, as his own confession had decided all; but it was necessary, for the forms of justice, that he should undergo a trial, before he could be sentenced to die. Yet his doom was certain; and Walter anxiously wished to soothe, if possible, the horrors of his approaching fate.

On entering the cell, Walter found Travers seated at a table writing. He did not rise, but extended his hand, while an expression of satisfaction brightened his haggard face.

"So you have not deserted me," said he, "you have come to bid farewell to your former merry companion. Well, I thank you for this visit. I had just completed my task, and would have found my own thoughts but poor company for the rest of the night. Sit down beside me—there, on the bed. You must put up with poor accommodation; but never mind, it is but for a short time."

Walter seated himself; and as he glanced round the dark walls of the dungeon, and from thence at the altered and wasted frame of the prisoner, he could scarcely believe that it was Travers who thus addressed him. Could it be Travers? The gay, happy, joyous being, whom but a few weeks before he had called his best and dearest friend; could the haggard visage, the wild and sunken eye, the pale and wasted cheek—could that be Travers? But the voice was still the same, and its accents, calm, kind, and sweet, rang on his ear, like a voice from the grave.

A pause of some length ensued. Walter was silent, because his emotions were too strong to permit his utterance. Travers was silent, for

he seemed absorbed in deep thought; and leaning his head on his hand, he gazed on Walter with an intense and searching glance.

"I dare say you will often think of our old arguments, Deverell," said he at length, with a bitter smile; "but does not my case prove the justice of my theory, that our affections serve no purpose but to pain us? Were I possessed of sufficient philosophy to regard no one but myself, the approach of death would not be so fearful as it now appears. I, too, have as few of those weak fancies, termed affections, as any man; and yet, few and slight as they are, they come thronging on my soul, and embittering the last hours of my existence. We must all die sometime, what boots it whether we end our life on a bed of down or a scaffold? Nothing, were it not for the absurd prejudices of survivors, to whom our foolish notions link us so strongly, as to fear their scruples and regrets, even beyond the grave. Thus it is with me. Fear, coward feelings, that damning folly which men call affection, has made me what I am—a murderer! Had I valued the opinion of none, I should not have been tempted to commit the crime that for its object had my own aggrandizement, that I might be of consequence in the eyes of others. Had I valued the feelings of none, I should not have shrunk from the death which awaited the discovery of

my crime. I had friends, forsooth; I loved them, and it would wound their feelings to have owned a murderer for their kinsman. Yes; as God is my witness, that conviction tortured my soul far more than the fear of death. To avoid that, I suffered Marmot to be condemned. Conscience-smitten, in a moment of remorse I revealed my crime to you from that same fear. I permitted you to sacrifice honour and to risk even life to conceal my guilt; and even now, when death is inevitable, my coward soul fears to meet its fate, not from dread of the eternity before it, but shame and sorrow for the survivors it leaves behind. Ay, you may well be silent; you may well look with surprise on my avowal. Doubtless one would think a murderer ought to have other thoughts than worldly pride or earthly feelings. He ought rather to prepare his soul for the mighty and fearful tribunal, before which he must appear. Good, good! let priests counsel thus, and hypocrites pretend to obey their counsel. Wretches, they lie, even on the brink of eternity. What is the next world to them? A chaos, a void, a vast eternity, which their confused minds can form no idea of. They fear, but they cannot comprehend it. This world, this existence, its pangs, its pleasures, the ties that have linked their spirits to the fleshly tenement, of these alone they think, for

these alone they tremble. Beings of this life only, while its pulse throbs and its blood flows, of that alone they can feel."

As he spoke, the wretched man paced the floor of his dungeon; he struck his burning forehead with his clenched hand, and, as the fetters rang with the motion, he groaned aloud in the bitterness of despair.

Walter shuddered, but he pitied him; and, taking his hand, he spoke in a soft and soothing tone, "Travers! think more calmly. It is too late now to talk of regrets for those errors which no repentance can now expiate. It is folly, nay, worse, to waste the short time which remains of your life in emotions so unavailing."

"Kind friend, you counsel well," replied Travers in a calmer tone, but in accents somewhat ironical. "My time is indeed short, but it is shorter than even my judges dream of, though, I doubt not, they have resolved to pronounce my doom. But no matter; forgive me, Deverell; to you at least I owe all that remains of gratitude. It is too late to express it. Let us talk of past times; you are right, there is no use in regrets; talk of all our happy meetings; happy, yes, even though the fiend of remorse sometimes smote my soul, I have been happy

with you. I was guilty, but no one knew of my crime but myself, and I could judge in my own reasoning of its magnitude. I was at no loss to subdue my scruples. The philosophy, for which you so often reproached me, served to free my conscience from a great burden. He whom I had robbed of life was a worthless being. I knew him to be such, for I had seen enough of his vicious courses and dishonourable conduct to convince myself that he was so. He was a stranger from a distant land, and, in all probability, had no friends who could suffer by his death. They might never hear of it, and if they did, the shock could not be great when time and absence had softened it. It is true, I did not calculate all this before I did the deed; but such were the arguments that I summoned to my own mind to subdue all regrets and remorse on the subject. But a truce with that tale of crime. Let us forget it. Let us forget all that has passed since the last night we spent together in mirth and friendship. Let us talk of our former happy days. Nay, peace! I know what you would say; you would bid me talk of eternity, and of my future salvation or eternal punishment. But, no, no; I cannot bear it. I will not think of it. Shut out the idea. My time is too brief, and my brain would go on fire at

the thought; and the vengeance of Heaven can neither be appeased or incensed by the feelings of a wretch who has scarcely an hour to live."

Walter would have attempted to reason with him, but he saw plainly it would be impossible. To soothe the tortured mind of the unfortunate being was all that at present was in his power: which he endeavoured to do by every argument which was capable of being produced under such circumstances.

"You are kind, too kind, Deverell," said he, wringing the hand of our hero within his own, which burned with unearthly heat; "I shall not long impose on your patience. There are still favours which I might ask, but I cannot bear to name them; yet they are too deeply linked with my feelings to admit of any other thought. Do not shudder at the name of Rose being profaned by the lips of a murderer. I was not always what I now am. No, no; Rose only knows me as her happy cousin, whom she loved because he made her laugh, and laughed with her. She will pity me; she will not weep for the murderer who deserved his fate, but for the once kind and guiltless boy, who loved her before he knew the name of crime. I would wish you to be the bearer of the news of my death. But, no, you cannot; the *fame* of my crime will spread far and wide before the tongue

of friendship can soften its details. Well! no matter; you will perhaps offer your consolation. They love you; I know they do; for poor Rose has counselled me in her letters to be your friend. Ha! she little knew the fearful bond which was soon to link us. Tell her all, Walter. Tell her not to weep. Bid her not regret one whose fate must of necessity have been separated from hers. Tell her to think only on Charles Travers as she first knew him. Bid her date his death at the period when we last parted, and forget all that has elapsed since then; for from that time I became a changed being. I ask no promise, for I know your kind heart will soften her sorrow. Give me your hand; I would fain feel its warm pressure clasping mine. You start; does my hand burn? It will be cold enough ere to-morrow. Be not startled, Walter; I am dying, not of a broken heart. Ha! ha! I like that idea. Not of remorse or fear, but I shall not perish on a scaffold. Hist! come closer to me, lest they hear and hasten to fulfil the vengeance of justice. I am dying. I poisoned myself at the moment I knew I was betrayed. The deadly draught was one that would operate in twelve hours. My time is come; I feel the fire of death burning in my veins; I feel the approaches of agony thrill my frame. Nay, peace! Summon no aid. It would be in vain;

they might hasten death, but nothing can retard it. Oh, in mercy, do not leave me! Your task will be short. The struggle will be brief, but it will be painful. Stand by till all is over. Let me have one kind friend whose helping hand will not shrink from my last agony. God! my brain is burning. Hell's torments gnaw my entrails. Help! hold me, Deverell. Mercy! mercy on my soul!"

Walter sprang forward in time to save him from falling on the floor. He supported him; and for a few moments his frame was convulsed with agony, which shook every nerve. The foam flowed from his mouth; and, with clenched hands, he gnashed his teeth, and suppressed the groans which heaved his labouring chest. The fit passed away. He lifted his head. His face was ghastly pale. The cold damp dew stood on his brow, and his sharpened and distorted features bore the stamp of death. Walter saw too plainly that he had spoken the truth, and that a few moments would, in all probability, end the existence of the wretched sufferer. For a moment he hesitated if he ought not to call for assistance. For a moment his heart failed him, as he supported the convulsed and struggling frame, but it was only for a moment. Walter was strong-minded and brave, and his presence of mind never long deserted him. He saw plainly that all

aid would be unavailing, wherefore need he summon the jailers, and executioner of the wretched victim, to witness and harass his last moments? It would be useless, and cruel as it was useless. With silent but prompt attention Walter therefore sustained the convulsed frame of the sufferer; and when the paroxysm of agony had subsided, he wiped the cold sweat and foam from his face. "Travers, dear Travers," he exclaimed, "fear not, *I* am still with you. I will not desert you. Death is not surely eternal, and while here you have still a friend.

"Peace! Talk not of futurity. Once again I implore—I command—address nothing to me of my *future* life. I am dying. I can think of nothing but the agony which rages in this fleshly frame. God of mercy! O, I cannot pray! my tongue would utter blasphemy in my torture. My eyes are dim. Hold! do not leave me. Ha! look yonder; *he* beckons to me! His eyes are bright; they glare on me! They are bright with the fire of hell! Wretch! fiend! begone! —your revenge is sure. Look, look! His face is livid and blood-swollen! There is a black mark on his throat! There—I griped it. I heard the death-rattle, but I thought there were no witnesses; but there was one. Wretch! vile harlot! she betrayed me. Talk of woman's love! *Love!* ha, ha! there is no *love!* Lust

and sin! give that name to their evil passions. Ha! I am raving! Give me your hand, Deverell. Come nearer to me. You at least have not betrayed me. But she! Ha, Deverell! was it not strange that chance made you bestow charity on her? Do you remember that night? Do you remember the stairs? It was I who passed you! I knew you. My heart sank within me. I trusted her; but I was not sure that want and despair might not have prompted her to reveal. My hand impulsively was raised. I grasped a pistol! It was *loaded!* You hurried past. The speed of your step alone saved you! Ha, ha! I am confessing all; more than I meant to avow to mortal man. Yes, I meant to have murdered you! At that moment I would not have hesitated. What! do you not start? Do you not hate me? No, no, you will pray for me; pray—pray for mercy on my sinful soul. No! But there is one who will; Rose will pray for me. She can plead with the pure language of an innocent heart. Ha! my brain is surely wandering! I fancy I see her before me; and I know it must be fancy, for she looks not as when we parted, but as she was in our days of childhood,—as I have seen her kneeling at her mother's feet, conning her evening prayer before she retired to rest. Hist! I can hear her voice! she pleads for mercy on

me!—mercy on Charles Travers, the murderer! —mercy, mercy, on the soul of the murderer!"

At these last words, the voice of the wretched man was raised with wild and fearful energy. A hoarse and frantic shriek followed, and again he sank back in a convulsion fit.

Speechless with horror and agitation, Walter was no longer capable of calling assistance, for it required all his strength and energy to support and restrain the violent convulsions of the sufferer, who now shrieked in the extreme of agony. The wild and piercing cries of the dying man echoed through the cell, and sounded loud and fearful in the silence of the midnight prison. The guards, stationed not far distant from the door, of course gave instant alarm, and in a few minutes Walter found himself surrounded by a crowd of persons, whose astonishment and confusion rendered them little able to assist him. Assistance was useless. The struggle was fearful, but short. The wretched prisoner did not see the approach of his jailers. His eyes were glazed and blinded by death; and though the wild shriek of pain indicated the torture of his frame, all sense of mental anguish or earthly existence was over. He clung to the last with convulsive and firm grasp to his friend; and it was not without much

difficulty, even after death, that his clenched hands could be unclasped from the arm of Walter, who, with shuddering frame but pitying heart, assisted to lay on the pallet bed of his dungeon, the blackened and distorted corpse of Charles Travers.

CHAPTER III.

THERE are certain feelings which the human mind cannot undergo and remain unchanged. Violent passions, whether productive of pleasure or pain, always leave behind them an impression which can never be effaced, but remain indelible on the mind, as the scars of wounds, long after the sensation is gone.

Thus Walter felt. The death of Travers, the fearful series of events which had preceded it, and the violent emotions which he had suffered during that period, had an after-effect more powerful than their first occurrence; and it was not till all was over, that he felt the full force of the shock he had sustained.

It was long before he could bear to reflect on the past; and when he did, he shuddered at it. The whole world seemed joyless, and full of horror. Walter was strong-minded, and had not reason come powerfully to his aid, his feelings must have overwhelmed him. He had loved Travers as a friend, with all the warm attachment of a youthful heart. Their intercourse had been close and confiding. The fear-

ful sequel chilled his soul, and for a time he felt that he could never again confide in humanity. In this state of mind, it may be supposed that he felt noways dissatisfied at receiving a letter from his grandfather, expressly desiring him to quit Paris instantly, and return to Devonshire.

Paris was to him a scene of desolation and regret. He longed to quit a spot which daily kept up the memory of such a scene; and, although he looked forward to his return home with but little pleasure, he readily assented to obey the mandate, without even inquiring the cause. Of that, however, he had little doubt, as in all probability the extraordinary circumstances in which he had lately been involved had reached the ears of his grandfather, who must in that case be anxious to see him.

It was now eighteen months since his departure for Paris, and he felt noways anxious to prolong his stay; therefore, immediately on the receipt of the letter, he set off for England. Having formed no friendships, he quitted Paris without regret, accompanied by the faithful Lewis, who had attached himself so strongly to his benefactor, as to be regarded by him as a necessary part of himself.

Behold our hero once more returning to his native home. But with what different feelings from those with which he quitted it! Did his

heart not beat high? Did he not rejoice as he approached the shore where dwelt she whom he so fondly loved? No. Had he ceased to love her? Alas! no. His aching heart told him too truly that his affections were unchanged; while reason and stern truth told him he loved in vain. How?

Eighteen months had elapsed since he parted from Alice Russel. At parting, they had made no regular arrangement about their correspondence; indeed, the brief period between their interchange of vows and their separation, had left no time for such cool reflections. But the heart of a lover is of little value, who hesitates to address the object of his affections until he shall have sought and obtained her permission to do so. Walter wrote a long letter to Alice on the first day of his arrival at Paris. It was sent by post, and therefore it was certain she must have received it. No answer came, although it was couched in terms of honourable and openly-avowed affection, which left no room for doubts or scruples as to the propriety of reply.

Another, and another, was written and sent with as bad success; until at length even the fond dream of love could no longer lull the whispers of suspicion. Alice was false! There was a time when he would have spurned his own thoughts for such a suggestion; but could he

doubt it when proof so incontestable was given? Many, indeed, were the excuses which he pleaded for her, before he could admit of the belief. Many were the letters written in vain, demanding at least a reply, though it was to pronounce an eternal separation; but in vain: and, with wounded feelings and indignant pride, Walter at last resolved to renounce the pursuit of one who evidently scorned him and his proffered affection.

Strange this must seem to our reader, who, aware of the unaltered love of poor Alice, and aware of her likewise disappointed hopes, will be unable to comprehend this mystery. The sequel of our narrative will explain all; but till then we cannot account for it. In the mean while, it is not wonderful that our hero should regard this seeming neglect, or studied reserve, on the part of Alice, as a proof that she no longer valued his affection. Might it not be possible, since the misfortunes of Mrs. Russel (of which Walter being ignorant, still directed his letters to her house), that the letters might not have reached her? That was impossible, as notice had been left at Caroline-street, that all letters or parcels brought there, were to be forwarded to Mr. Gardiner's, from whence they were sent to their destination. Therefore, as none of Walter's letters had been returned, they must have been conveyed there.

Another circumstance strengthened the suspicion which naturally arose in Walter's mind,—a circumstance which had poisoned his hopes, even before he had anticipated this result. Our reader will perhaps recollect the night a few days previous to Walter's departure from London. The mysterious voice he heard conversing with Alice, and the figure of the man, which he distinctly saw quit the house; all this now recurred forcibly to his mind; and, adding fuel to the fire already kindled, stung his soul with doubt and despair.

Walter was proud, and pride requires the guidance of strong judgment to avoid error; but who can blame him, if, under these circumstances, he suffered indignation to stifle all other feelings; and secretly vowed to banish for ever from his affections, one whose perfidy had proved her to be unworthy of love?

Vain dream! His young heart must suffer more than it has felt, before it can forget a passion linked with the dearest, first, and happiest feelings of his existence.

It was the bleak and chilly month of February, when Walter reached his native shore; and again, for the first time during a lapse of more than six years, approached the home of his youth. West Hall was still the same; and as its ancient and somewhat gloomy exterior me

his view, while the carriage drove slowly up the long sweeping avenue, our hero felt the strong contrast between its unaltered appearance, and the change which his own feelings had undergone since he last beheld it. There was the spreading lawn, where in childhood he had sported. The winter frost had robbed it of its verdure, but spring would restore it the same as ever; though no genial season could bring back the unsullied and bright feelings of childhood.

These were gloomy reflections for one so young; but it is a weakness general to all mankind, to dwell with regret on the past; and it is a mistaken belief that this regret is increased by age. From the first years of childhood, man is equally prone to the pains of retrospection. In later years his regrets are not stronger, but more numerous, in proportion as he has a longer period and more events to look back to; and in advanced age, when the future is limited, memory occupies the place of hope.

Walter was not naturally of a desponding mind, but early associations had taught him to look too much at the dark side of the world. His soul was framed for warm affections, and fate had destined him to be, as it were, a solitary being, one whose heart was framed for every genial and sacred tie; but condemned to yearn

in vain for those affections which were denied it. Often in his childhood, surrounded by every luxury and comfort, in the princely mansion of his grandfather, he had thought with bitter regret on those first years of his existence, which, though spent in poverty, were endeared by the affection of his parents, and consequently happier than wealth uncheered by the smile of love.

To his grandfather he owed much gratitude; and his heart was fully sensible of the benefits he had received; but gratitude is not love, and Richard Deverell was a man little calculated to inspire love. It is true, that towards the orphan of his son, his conduct had been irreproachable; for the pangs of remorse had counselled him to atone for his former cruelty; but the actions of a man are but little to be depended on, who is guided merely by the dread of the consequences of doing evil, and not the desire to do good.

Walter had never loved his grandfather. In his childhood he feared him, and as he grew up to reason, he could not esteem a man, who, though kind to him, showed plainly, by his violent and unjust conduct to others, that his heart was naturally cruel and merciless. Yet this man was the only being in the world who loved Walter—the only being who had shown a single feeling for his happiness; and Walter's heart sank within him at this consciousness, while he

reproached himself for his own ingratitude towards this only friend. As the post-chaise drew up at the door, our traveller was agreeably saluted by the well-known faces of several ancient domestics, who presented themselves, eager to welcome him. They appeared to have been expecting his arrival, for they were dressed in their holiday attire, and the mansion bore tokens of preparations for a festival, which was rare in West Hall.

"You seem to have made grand arrangements for me," said he, smiling, to the old housekeeper, who, after he had passed through the group of the other servants who encountered him in the hall, followed him up the staircase, indulging her garrulity in a thousand questions; remarks on his altered, and, of course, improved appearance, with kind and sincere expressions of delight at his return.

"Nay, then; I knew you would be surprised, as it is seldom that West Hall looks gay; but you will be more surprised when I tell you that it was the squire himself who gave orders for all these decorations. It is true, the arranging of everything fell to my task, and I exerted the best of my poor abilities to do honour to the approaching happy occasion; but the squire ordered it all himself. Poor gentleman! I never saw him so good-humoured and high-spirited in

all my life, and for all though he's so bad with the gout he can't stir off the sofa. He will be delighted to see you. He must have seen the carriage drive up the walk. He has been looking out at the window all the morning. Poor dear gentleman! he suffers much, yet; as soon as he got up, he made me wheel the easy-chair close to the window, that he might look out for you."

"Has my grandfather been ill?" inquired Walter. "He never told me of it in his letters."

"No, dear heart, he wouldn't likely have mentioned it, for fear of damping your spirits on the present occasion; besides, he is much better now, and the doctors say there is no danger of the gout getting into his stomach; which was what we were so afraid of. But for goodness' sake, don't make any remark; as he is always so angry when any one says he looks ill."

Here they reached the door of the well-remembered apartment where Deverell sat; and quickening his steps, Walter entered the presence of his grandfather, who rose on his appearance, and welcomed him with extended hand, and a smile of more kindness and an accent more affectionate than had ever before greeted his ear from that harsh voice and stern aspect."

"God bless you, my dear boy," he exclaimed in

a tremulous accent; and, touched with unwonted emotion, Walter knelt at his feet to receive that blessing. As he rose, the old man kindly motioned to him to seat himself near him. As he examined him with kind and approving glance, Walter was shocked at the alteration which a few years had made on his grandfather. The signs of age were visible in his once erect and muscular frame; which was much bent, and the ravages of disease had left their traces on his sallow countenance. But though altered, his features wore less of their former sternness. The subduing influence of bodily pain, had weakened the violent passions which were formerly so marked on his furrowed brow, and in his fierce, restless eye.

"You look earnestly at me, Walter," said he, with a forced smile, "I dare say you think me much changed? though not for the better like yourself. Time has indeed done much for you. I can scarcely believe that you are the slight boyish stripling, whom I parted from but a few years ago. Well! a few years make a great change at two periods of life—youth and age. But I have much to question you about. These are strange doings you have been engaged in at Paris; it was but a short and unsatisfactory account you gave me, and I shall hear the whole now; but I will not impose too much

on your patience till you are thoroughly rested. Did you travel hither alone?"

"With one attendant, or rather friend," replied Walter. "A youth, to whom I must beg you to extend your kindness; as he has been my companion ever since I left England. I regard him as a friend, and would wish to treat him as such."

Deverell's brow clouded for a moment, but he replied, "Whatever you wish, is at your service in this house; I am not well calculated to amuse strangers, particularly if they are young and light-hearted; but your friend is welcome to make my house a home."

This was a more cordial assent than Walter had any expectation of receiving, when he hazarded the request; for the habits of his grandfather were little akin to social feelings. Reserved, gloomy, and even insulting in his demeanour towards strangers, Walter had hesitated to introduce Lewis, without first requesting permission; and therefore had left him below stairs, to attend to the unpacking of the luggage, until he should be formally announced.

"Things are not changed here since I left them," said Walter, as he walked to the window and looked out on the vast extent of the well-known prospect. All was the same—all in the room was the same also. The very furniture

was unchanged. On the chimney-piece stood a curious antique time-piece, one of the hands was still bent, and the glass was slightly scratched, exactly as he remembered it to have been when he first saw it. A huge volume of engravings and prints, with which he had been accustomed to amuse himself when a child, lay on its wonted place—the side table, near which stood the very chair where he used to sit.

It was not without some little emotion that our hero opened the portentous volume which had beguiled so many hours, and turning over the leaves glanced at the often-admired and valued contents. Between more than one of the pages lay sheets of paper, embellished with various attempts at drawing, once valued as *chef d'œuvres* of the art.

Walter sighed as he turned away. A sigh for the days gone by—dear to memory, because gone for ever. His eye met that of his grandfather, fixed on him with a glance of stern but curious scrutiny.

"Methinks your absence has not changed your nature, although it has altered your outward appearance," said he, with something of irony in his accent and smile. "Ever as you were wont to be, sighing over imaginary evils."

Walter coloured. He felt his indignation rise at the bitterness of this unmerited reproach.

"You judge quickly, but not justly," replied he; "I had no remembrance of any evil, real or imaginary, at this moment. If I sighed, it was from the recollections of good; but I was unconscious that my thoughts intruded on you."

"Nay, there again," said Deverell, smiling, and in a good-humoured tone; "I see you are unchanged in anything. Proud and fiery as ever. Impatient, doubtless of contradiction, and unwilling to be questioned even on your feelings. Well, well—no matter; let us talk of more important subjects. I shall not admit of your fatigue as an excuse, as I have much to question you about. Apropos, I presume you have corresponded regularly with the Earl of Ellerton?"

"Not regularly. His lordship has honoured me with various commissions during my stay at Paris. I had, of course, to write on that account; but I do not think our correspondence extended any further."

"Indeed! The earl has written frequently to me; and in all his letters has mentioned your name, and spoken highly of your improvement in the studies you were occupied with."

"Truly I am obliged to his lordship, though I am not aware how he gained any information about me."

"Humph!—may be; but where a kind interest is felt, it is easy to judge well of any one. The

earl has always spoken of you with much kindness, and I esteem his friendship of more value than that of many men. But that boots nothing. You may not think of him as I do, and I do not wish to control your opinions, though, by-the-bye, that would seem to have been my intention in my sudden recalling of you from Paris. I dare say you must have wished to prolong your stay, and if so, you can return; but, in my opinion, it is time you were done with *schooling;* as, at your age, a man generally commences his career in life, and the sooner yours is fixed upon, the better for your future success."

"I am of your opinion; and, if I remember rightly, have urged that argument before this, and it was your advice which retarded me so long."

"True, true; you were always building castles in the air, about future independence and glory. Nay, do not redden so fiercely, I do not wish to underrate your enthusiasm. A spirit of independence is very good in its way, if not carried with too high a hand; but you must consider, Walter, there is a wide difference between winning the world in fancy with every want supplied, and actually earning your own subsistence by unaided exertions."

"I believe I can form some idea of the difference, sir, though I admit I have had but little

experience; but, I can only say, I am willing to take a trial of the latter situation; and with all true gratitude for your hitherto unbounded kindness, I would gladly (nay, I even prefer it) enter the world with no aid but my own exertions."

"Nay, not so fast. I well believe you would; but you mistake me; I have no intention of submitting you to such an ordeal. I have had enough of warring with the proud passions of youth. My term of existence in this world is now nearly at an end, and I would fain pass the few years which are remaining in peace. Walter, you know my failings—I have erred; but I have striven to atone for it. To you, at least, I have studied to act justly. If kindness was ever in my nature, it has been exerted towards you. If I have failed, it was not for want of the will to do good. To you, the only being I care for in the world, I would fain continue to act so, as I may say to my own conscience when I die, 'To one at least I have done my duty.'" Here the voice of the old man faltered, and he passed his hand across his brow to hide the emotion which for a moment convulsed his stern features. Walter's heart swelled with feelings of affection long alien to his soul; and he felt as if the spirit of his father breathed from the lips of him who gave him being. He would have thrown

himself at the feet of the aged man and craved his blessing, but he was checked by Deverell, who resumed his conversation with his wonted tone. The momentary emotion had passed away, and again Walter listened to the stern voice unmoved.

"These are idle reflections," resumed Deverell; "I would speak of worldly prospects, not of my feelings, which boot little or nothing to your future conduct. You have chosen a profession; a resolution which I always regarded as a whim, rather than of any main consequence. My fortune is ample. While I live it is at your service, and when I die of course it is yours. True, I may, if I choose, take it in my head to disinherit you, as no entail secures my not doing so; but I think you may run the risk of all chances of that sort. While I live you may indulge your fancy of being independent of my bounty, I do not object; but I think the heir to a fortune, far above his wants, may leave all professions, or trades, to those who have more need of them. I have no skill in the craft of a surgeon; therefore I cannot judge of your qualifications as such; but it is hardly worth your while to stand in the way of more necessitous candidates for success in the profession."

Walter coloured. Though not altogether

pleased with this speech, he could not refrain from a laugh, at his own expense, at the plain, and matter-of-fact, reasoning of the argument.

"That is all very true, I admit; but you must allow there are few who possess sufficient philanthropy to renounce even their *whims* for the real or fancied good of others in whom they have no interest. I agree with the reason of your argument in a philosophical point of view, but I beg to be excused from reducing it to practice."

"That means, simply, that you are still determined to be a doctor, surgeon, or whatever you choose to term the branch of that learned science, which you have studied with so much zeal?"

"Yes, simply so. I wish to begin business as a surgeon. That is to say, if I can get any one to employ me. I wish to try my own exertions at some occupation, and I prefer that; and although I hope I am not actuated merely by venal motives, I have no objections to turn my exertions to a source of profit. I should be very sorry to have to renounce a pursuit, which has so long been the chief object of my existence."

"An humble object, I must own," replied Deverell, with a smile. "So your ambition is limited to being called a surgeon. I hear you were deemed fully competent for such at the

wise colleges of Paris. Well, I hope you will pass equally triumphant in London, and gain the pinnacle of your aspiring hopes. Walter Deverell, surgeon, accoucheur too, perhaps, God willing. Money and influence will procure you a house in some of the West-end thoroughfares, where a brass-plate, and a night-bell, will, perhaps in time, establish your fame to the extent of a mile or two of the surrounding neighbourhood. I shall not attempt to follow the extent of your progress, as that may be more or less as circumstances cause it, and I have known as great an honour as knighthood bestowed on a wise and skilful scion of the profession. But the sum total of your glory consists in nothing but being able to soothe the fears, and influence the whims, of a few diseased and hypochondriac beings, whose life, if they trust it to the care of any mortal man, can be of very little consequence."

"That may be all very just reasoning, sir, and it would scarcely become me to contradict any theory of yours, however it might differ from my opinions; yet I strongly suspect, that all the actions and pursuits of human life are of equally little use when regarded in certain points of view. It has been said, by some wise philosopher, that the whole business of life consisted in taking bits of matter from one place and

putting them in another; and therefore, the difference of the modes of arranging them must be the only thing in our power to choose."

"Ay, ay! and your choice is to take all the most disgusting and useless drugs in nature, and put them into people's stomachs, who will pay you for so doing, and in listening to the details of their loathsome effects. Well, there is no accounting for tastes, to be sure; but I think you might have selected a more glorious employment."

Walter was silent, for he repressed the impulse he had to enter into a violent argument in defence of his chosen profession, which he felt indignant at hearing treated with contempt; but he saw that reasoning would have no effect with the old gentleman, who seemed inclined to be splenetic at the expense of anything which afforded him a subject. Yet Walter was somewhat at a loss to account for this sudden attack on a profession which had never before met with his disapproval; for, although his grandfather had never advised his adopting any avocation, he had never shown any serious objections. After a pause (during which Mr. Deverell senior stirred the fire twice, while his grandson remained steadily looking into it, as if to read his future destiny in the blaze) the former resumed

"And what do you propose are to be your

proceedings concerning this *surgeonship?* I am afraid the earl will think it an absurd affair, when he learns you are determined really to put it in practice, as like myself he has all along regarded it as a mere boy's fancy."

"I am not surprised at *your* assuming any authority over my actions, sir," replied Walter, colouring; "but I am at a loss to conceive any right or reason by which the Earl of Ellerton can be at all interested in them."

"By every right in the world, sir. The earl is a man of sound sense and reasoning; but he is a man of high rank, and that rank is of importance to him. Therefore, though he be willing to sacrifice much to science or enthusiasm, it cannot be expected that he will agree to anything which will compromise his high standing in society."

"Pardon me, sir; I do not rightly understand you. I know no reason that my conduct has to interest the earl or his rank either. I require nothing from his bounty. If you allude, as I presume you do, to the chances of his patronage, for that I care nothing. If my success depends on that alone, it has but a poor support. I do not intend to solicit his assistance, and therefore shall not ask his advice in anything."

"Proudly spoken! but speaking is easier than acting. Your day-dreams of genius and

fortune are all well enough to amuse yourself with; but, as your future fate, happiness, aggrandizement, or degradation, must depend on the man of whom you speak thus slightingly, it would perhaps be the wiser, even though it were the least agreeable plan, to endeavour to study his wishes, even contrary to your own. There is an old saying, you know, 'It is useless to sit in Rome, and strive with the pope.'"

"Upon my word, sir, I do not understand you. I am at a loss to account for the meaning of what you say."

"Nay, a truce with this affectation of modesty. I know everything as well as you do; and we must be plain with each other, as matters now approach a serious crisis. In a word, Walter, when a young man marries he becomes a member of his wife's family, whatever that family may be; and consequently, if he intends to succeed either in public or domestic life, he must endeavour to adapt his manners, wishes, and pursuits to theirs, in every possible way. You understand me now surely, and admit the truth of my argument."

Walter was deeper and deeper in amazement. He stared, unable to articulate his perfect ignorance.

"Come, come, leave off this foolish farce!" exclaimed Deverell, assuming a tone of good-

humoured banter; "I assure you it is useless to attempt concealing the matter from me. I knew all before you did yourself; and, if I had not, that tell-tale pledge on your finger must have hinted as much."

At these words, a sudden light flashed on the mind of Walter, as he glanced at the ring given to him by Lady Georgina Ellerton, which he wore as usual on his finger.

"I wish you would explain yourself," exclaimed he, starting up; "for I again protest I am utterly ignorant of what you mean."

"The protestations of lovers are not always to be believed. But I am an old man, Walter, and care but little for the mystery and day-dreams with which, like you, in early life I loved to dignify my actions. Love is to me an almost forgotten passion, and I judge only of its consequences—marriage and a settlement in the world. You have made a wise and virtuous choice; but, had it been less prudent, I would not have murmured; as it is, I feel no less grateful and happy. By your marriage with the daughter of the Earl of Ellerton, you not only secure a princely fortune and a lovely worthy bride, but you engraft on a line already lofty a noble alliance, which henceforth links it to the proudest peers of the realm. Had your father wedded thus—but that boots not now. I

can only give you my blessing, and congratulate you on your choice."

Had a thunderbolt from heaven fallen at the feet of our hero, he could not have been more astonished and transfixed to the spot than at this speech.

"My choice!" exclaimed he, after a pause of silent amazement. "In the name of Heaven, what do you mean? I have nothing to do with the daughter of Ellerton. I never had, and never shall."

"How! do you mean to prevaricate? Be on your guard, sir. I am not to be fooled. You are as well aware as I am that it has been an understood agreement between that nobleman and myself, seeing both parties willing, that you should espouse Lady Georgina immediately on your coming of age to judge for yourself. Peace, hear me to an end. You are likewise well aware that your conduct and marked attention to her ladyship, during your stay in London, plainly indicated your wish for the alliance, to which his lordship has at length given his consent; and, that no further delay may interfere with the happiness of yourself and his amiable daughter, he agreed with me to meet you here, for the purpose of celebrating the marriage; and I expect their arrival every moment."

"In that case," replied Walter, rising and

endeavouring to assume a calm tone, while his face glowed with indignant surprise, "I beg leave to take my departure. This whole affair has been planned without my knowledge. Whatever are the motives of all parties concerned, I neither know nor care; I only disclaim all part or interest in the matter. As regards the Earl of Ellerton, I consider him to have no authority over me. As to his daughter, I disclaim all idea or sentiment concerning her, except perfect indifference. I have not the slightest reason to believe she cares or ever cared a farthing for me, and I protest I never did for her. This is plain language, but it is the truth; and I earnestly hope all persons concerned in this absurd scheme would declare their feelings as openly."

Walter had resolved to command his temper; but he felt it a more difficult task than he imagined. He saw the dark red flush of rage crimson the pallid brow of his grandfather, who, rising from his chair, stood erect, as, with a voice hoarse with passion, he exclaimed—

"Insolent ungrateful wretch! Is this your return for my benefits? Is this the reward I am to receive for harbouring and cherishing an outcast, who but for me must have been a beggar? Look to yourself, proud stripling, ere you spurn the bounties that are offered you. The hour will arrive when you may plead for them in vain."

If the momentary impulse of anger had at first overpowered Walter's better reason, it was subdued at the sight of the ungovernable fury of one whose age and venerable appearance rendered such passions the more fearful to contemplate. He was silent for a moment, while he collected his ideas to reply as calmly and soothingly as possible. But although his cheek grew pale, it was emotion not fear that blanched it; for his voice was firm as he spoke—

"I do consider all. I have considered my situation often. I know all that I owe to your kindness, or rather your mercy towards me; but fate has so placed us that it is not in my power to give proofs of my gratitude. As far as regards myself, I am willing to perform any sacrifice you may command, except that which perjures my honour and mental independence. That I will not resign, but with life."

"Honour and independence! Poor fool! I point out the way by which you alone can secure both. Do you think *honour* consists in a mere name? Ay, what do you deem it? Is it like the blast of a war trumpet, or the sound of a lady's voice? And *independence*, how is that to be obtained, I wonder, if wealth, titles, and influence, cannot bestow it? Come, a truce with the dreams of idle romance. At the age of twenty-two, a man should give up boyish visions,

and look to reality. Honour is in your power; wealth, but that I do not value; rank, the dearest hope of ambition, is at your command. Seize it, and fear not; you will attain the pinnacle of fame by the only secure method,—influence and hereditary power."

"You reason justly, perhaps," replied Walter, calmly; "but to me the argument avails nothing. Ambition may deceive me with her visions. I may sometimes dream of fame, though incapable of meriting it; but reason, feeling, every principle of my nature teaches me, that if I cannot attain it by my own exertions or merits, I must renounce all hope; and, while life and reason remain, I shall scorn to seek other means of aggrandizement than those which accord with the wishes of my heart, or the dictates of my own opinions. Above all, I would scorn to perjure my faith, to degrade my nature, by uniting my existence with one for whom I could cherish no feeling but contempt, or at the best, utter indifference."

"Begone then! quit my presence for ever! Seek your fortune where your proud scruples think best to point out the way. Begone! Trace the footsteps of those from whom you sprang. Such were the arguments of your wretched father. *He* followed his own way-

ward resolve, and died a beggar. Go you and seek his fate!"

Walter stood erect. He folded his arms across his breast, as with undaunted firmness and steady gaze he met the flashing eye and upbraiding insults which were addressed to him. His resolve was unshaken, and even his feelings were unmoved. Had his heart been prone to emotion, the taunts which were intended to humble it would have sufficed to give strength and resolution. He looked on the stern features of his grandfather, convulsed with the fury of passion. He looked on the frame weakened by age, shaken and agitated by the violence of his denunciation. But he looked unmoved; for he felt that it was the murderer of his father who upbraided him, and he scorned the feelings which might otherwise have excited, if not sympathy, at least awe and respect.

"Be not in such haste to enforce your commands, I have no wish to disobey them," said he, calmly. "Gladly and willingly I resign all further claim on the bounty which has been too long bestowed on the son of him who perished in want of it. Gladly I depart from your house. I leave behind no regret, but that it is not in my power to repay the benefits I have received from its roof. Henceforth, I renounce all wish

or claim on even your recollection. The world is before me. I shall not forget what I already owe to you; and in future, I seek my own fortune, and choose my own fate. Farewell, for ever!"

Deverell sunk back on his seat. He gnashed his teeth with rage, and the foam covered his quivering lips as he yelled aloud—

"Begone, wretch! for ever. Let it be *for ever!* Never again darken my threshold with that accursed form! Quit my presence. Go, starve! beg! Seek mercy and bread where you can get it, for henceforth I give neither. No! deceive not yourself with idle hopes. My resolution is fixed. It is irrevocable. You have witnessed it already. Go, perish! Seek the fate of him, who, like you, incurred a father's curse!"

Walter sought not to reply. He wished for no amelioration of his sentence. His mind was fixed; and even the bitterness of this parting invective had no power to affect it. With slow but firm step he strode towards the enraged man. He bowed respectfully, but proudly.

"Farewell! I do not ask you to retract your curse," said he, in a firm voice. "We part for ever!"

Then, turning abruptly away, he quitted the

apartment, heedless of the malediction which followed his departing steps.

He descended the staircase. Lewis was still in the hall, engaged in unpacking some of the luggage which was there, assisted by the old housekeeper, who, with due importance, stood examining and arranging every article of wearing apparel which had been unpacked and transmitted to her inspection and care.

"Dear squire, I am so glad you have come down," said she, the moment our hero made his appearance on the stairs; "I was just coming up to ask where you would like your clothes laid,—in the large new wardrobe which was brought yesterday, or in the old one which stands in your room. I wasn't sure but what you would like the old one best, as you were accustomed to it always."

"Is the post-chaise gone?" demanded Walter, addressing himself to Lewis, who was kneeling before an open trunk, engaged in turning out its contents, and looked up with apparent astonishment.

"No; the man is still waiting out there. I have not paid him yet, because I waited for you to settle with him."

"Quick, then; rise, and come to the chaise!"

"Lord love your honour," exclaimed the old

housekeeper, bustling up, "I wish you wouldn't think of going out to look at the grounds till after luncheon: it is quite ready. I have given orders for the cloth to be laid in the wainscotted room, and all will be elegant in a few minutes. Besides, if the earl and lady his daughter should chance to arrive, and you not ready to receive them!"

"Rise up, Lewis! Did you hear what I said?" repeated Walter, in a tone of impatience.

"My good Mrs. Marlow," said he, checking himself, and addressing the housekeeper in a kind tone, "you must excuse my abrupt want of politeness, but I have not a moment's time to spare. I must bid you good bye for the present;" and extending his hand, he shook that of the astonished old woman with a friendly pressure; and hurrying across the hall, followed by Lewis, who hastened after him in silent amazement, he opened the door, sprang into the chaise, and ordered the postilion to drive off with all possible speed.

"Where?" inquired the man, who stood holding the door.

This question recalled Walter to a sense of recollection. Where?—he had never questioned himself. He paused for a moment, and then answered—"To London."

The postilion glanced at his tired horses, and smiled internally at the impossibility of such a journey with them. It was easy to obtain a change at the nearest inn, therefore he made no remark, but, closing the door, sprang on his seat, and drove off as rapidly as the wearied animals could be urged to gallop.

Behold our hero launched, as it were, on the wide world, for the first time, to brave its trials and stem its stormy ocean alone. Here for a while let us leave him, to return to one who, though far separated from his fate, was once linked to his soul with its dearest ties.

CHAPTER IV.

As a year and more has elapsed since we last spoke of our heroine, it will be necessary to give at least a sketch of her motions and actions during that length of time; we therefore return to the period when we left her.

A whole month had then elapsed since her first acquaintance with Lady Mary Foster. Well, another month passed on with little variation, save that caused by her frequent visits at the cottage, whose polished and witty inhabitant continued to excite interest and afford amusement. But although Alice felt no ways reluctant to beguile an hour in the society of Madame Durant, her visits were chiefly for the sake of the children, in whom that lady seemed to take great interest, and who were strongly attached to her. There were many traits in the character of Madame which by no means endeared her to the affections of Alice. There was an easy confidence,—a proud and almost arrogant bearing in her manners and conversation towards Alice, which in one less her superior in years would have seemed almost insulting. Besides, in

speaking of Lady Mary, Madame frequently assumed a style both slighting and disrespectful, which by no means could be agreeable to any one so much attached to her ladyship as Alice had every reason to be.

The visits to the cottage were well known to Lady Mary, who gave her full consent to everything that pleased the children ; and who in their turn amused her with the details of their interviews with the *lady*, as they termed their friend; but although Lady Mary showed sufficient interest in these stories, she expressed no desire to see the individual who was the object of them ; and in reply to Alice's questions, declared herself ignorant of any person answering that description ; and among the list of her acquaintances, she did not remember the name of Madame Durant. Perhaps, however, that lady might be a foreigner, and perhaps might have met her at different assemblies, or other places of entertainment ; but if so, it had entirely escaped her (Lady Mary's) recollection.

"At all events," she said, "I would rather avoid any renewal of intimacy with any of those who had known her in London. The years which I spent there, are associated with events too painful to be renewed, and circumstances which can only be remembered with shame and bitterness."

Hints such as this, which often fell from her ladyship, gave rise to a supposition in Alice's mind, that some misfortunes had caused her to seek a retirement, so little consistent with the probable choice of one whose youth, beauty, and accomplishments rendered her so well fitted for the gay and brilliant circles of society. Alice forbore questioning her, but many circumstances combined to render her uneasy and curious with regard to the mystery which involved her fair hostess.

Lady Mary had said that she was separated from her husband before his death. She had mentioned no cause. Was it not possible that the cause was such as she blushed to mention? Was it possible she might have been divorced? If so, what then? It was not unnatural that a young and unprotected girl like Alice should feel anxious with regard to the character and fair fame of one under whose roof she had sought a permanent home. But that was not the cause of her anxiety; she did not wish to investigate the past conduct of Lady Mary; but there were certain circumstances in her present mode of conduct, which might have excited a painful suspicion in any one, however willing to find excuses, and to rely in confidence.

The nocturnal rambles, regularly noticed by our heroine, and evidently unknown to any other

person of the household,—the frequent fits of grief and abstraction,—the dark and equivocal hints of Madame Durant, all conspired to excite in Alice a suspicion which she trembled to confess to her own mind.

More than once she resolved to tax Lady Mary with the circumstance of her mysterious excursions; but as often her resolve failed her. She had no right to question the conduct of one under whose roof she had voluntarily sought a home, and who sought to detain her under no pretext but that of friendship and hospitality. She was silent, for who could have been otherwise? But as the security of confidence was disturbed, her peace was at an end. Sometimes she felt inclined to quit Lady Mary; but in spite of all her suspicions, she was strongly attached to her: so much so, that the idea of a separation was painful. Sometimes she felt inclined to hate herself for entertaining a moment's doubt of one so kind, so winning, and so amiable; and she cordially detested Madame Durant for her insinuations, which, although it was impossible to attack, from their ambiguous and guarded nature, had been sufficient to add strength to the suspicion which had destroyed her confidence in her friend.

During this period, Alice felt much relief in imparting all her feelings to her ever-constant

friend and correspondent, Emma Gardiner, to whom she confided all that passed, not only of the events of her life, but the conjectures and perplexities of her mind. Although she wrote as regularly to her mother, her letters, though affectionate, were less explanatory, as far as related to her *feelings*, which, like those of most young ladies, would sometimes consist of day dreams, and *aerial castles;* which can find sympathy only in hearts as young and visionary as themselves.

Emma's letters were a source of delight. They were frequent, and, though generally short, always contained some entertaining news. Some anecdotes, trivial, but endeared because relating to early and home associations; those minor details and domestic feelings, which never fail to find sympathy in and give pleasure to the far-off wanderer from home. She spoke little or nothing of the past, but sometimes expressed hopes of the future; hopes, which showed that her heart was overflowing with kindness and anxiety for the welfare of her friend. Her letters were universally cheerful, indeed, often written in a strain of pleasantry and gaiety, which surprised Alice, who, nevertheless, rejoiced to see that she appeared happy. Several hints, which could not be mistaken, apprised Alice that her friend was on the eve of marriage. She had signified the

possibility of such an event when they parted, and Alice was at no loss to guess who would be the favoured lover. Emma had many suitors. Fortune is very capricious on that point.

Many young and beautiful women who marry well in the end, pass the whole period of their maidenhood unsought and unwooed by any but him who wins them; while others, with but little apparent attraction, are surrounded by offers eager and numerous to claim their choice.

Such was the case with Emma; and her choice was dictated by good sense, reason, and esteem. How far affection had to do with it, we cannot presume to decide. She wrote to Alice, informing her of her choice. She spoke highly of the good qualities, excellent heart, and strong reason of her husband. "A union strengthened by esteem and affection, founded on reason, would outlive the day dream of infatuated passion, which perishes when reality destroys its self-created idol, whose virtues exist only in fancy."

Such were her expressions in the letter which Alice received, announcing her marriage with Edmund Maxwell, a young man of moderate fortune; but whose steady industry and amiable disposition were well calculated to secure esteem and ample independence. They were on the point of setting out for Bath at the period she

wrote; where the relations of her husband resided, and where he intended to follow his profession, that of a lawyer, and to establish himself there. The letter concluded by the wishes of the happy bride, that her friend might be as fortunate and happy as herself; and an earnest hope, that before long, when they were fairly settled, she and her husband might have the pleasure of a visit from Alice; who, they trusted, would always regard their house as her home.

Nothing could be more affectionate. Yet this letter excited many sensations in the breast of Alice, which were more painful than happy; although she was unable to account for their cause. She knew not why, but the marriage of Emma seemed to have, in a great measure, broken the tie of confidence between them. Emma was now become the wife of one, who, if she loved with that affection which a wife ought to feel for her husband, would necessarily become her confidant in everything. The secrets of her friend might be held sacred from others, but from her husband she could have no secrets. Besides, the duties, the cares, which her new situation must require, would, of necessity, occupy her mind, and interest her affections, in which there would now be but a limited space for the claims of distant friendship. Besides, Alice felt that in mar-

rying, Emma had shown that her feelings were not of that exalted and superior nature which she had given her credit for. If she had loved Walter as she had professed, could she so soon and so easily have given her hand to another? What! Alice could not, surely, be displeased at her friend, thus having conquered and forgotten an attachment which must have proved fatal to the happiness of all parties? No, but Alice loved with a passion so deep and devoted, that she felt it would be preferable to sacrifice all else, rather than forget *her love*. She judged of love by her own exalted feelings of the passion; and she could not help thinking, that the heart which could forget or change its object, must be in some degree insensible to the finer and stronger feelings of nature. She judged from the impulse of a young and inexperienced mind, a heart, whose feelings yet untried, was incapable of deciding on those of others.

One day, on making her usual morning visit at the cottage, she was surprised to find a stranger with Madame Durant, who had always declared she never received any visiters. This person was a gentleman, fashionably attired, and strikingly handsome, apparently upwards of thirty. Alice was not a little confused, and would have withdrawn, as she did not wish to intrude, but madame prevented her.

"Do not be alarmed, Miss Russel," said she, laughing, "you have not interrupted any secret conspiracy. Let me introduce you to my son. We shall be happy of your company to join us."

Alice felt her cheeks crimson, as she exchanged the necessary salutations with the stranger, who, though he bowed with all due elegance and politeness, looked at her with an inquisitive and somewhat impertinent stare of scrutiny, which was by no means agreeable. This feeling was but momentary, for his attention was instantly turned to the children, to whom madame sportively introduced him, as her little friends. He proceeded to amuse himself with them, laughed loudly at the ready prattle of little Ellen, lounged on the sofa, looked out at the window, whistled an Italian air, and then, looking at his watch, bowed his leave and walked. Alice felt relieved.

"My son is just newly arrived from London," said madame. "He came for the purpose of taking me home, and I have made him consent to remain a month with me here. It will do his health a deal of good, and we shall return together before the Christmas gaieties commence. I trust that his presence here will not make any difference to your visits. By-and-by, you will get better acquainted; and while we remain here, your company will enliven our retirement. But you must not expect a conquest, though,"

added she, laughing, "for my son is, unfortunately, married; and as he has a wife and a large family, anxiously awaiting his return to town, it would not be convenient to leave his heart here. After all, too, I question if he will spend much of his time in my hermitage during his stay, for the village of Matlock is very gay, even at this late season, and he has many friends here, else, I suspect, he would not have been so ready coming to chaperon me home. I suppose you have heard of the late gay arrivals, and the intended scheme of setting up a theatre, where several noble individuals propose to try their skill in personating parts, no less important and useful than their own on the real stage of life. I hear it is to be quite a splendid affair; but I feel no desire to see it, for I can see no good gained by all that trouble, to get up a thing which at best can be a sorry and miniature copy of what can be seen any day for no trouble at all. Has Lady Mary any share in the green room? I hear tragedy is the most favoured theme, and I should think that ought to suit her taste."

"I never heard anything about it until now from yourself, madame," replied Alice, a little irritated at the attempt to ridicule her friend; "and I presume Lady Mary is equally ignorant, as she has not visited the village, to my knowledge, since I came to reside with her."

"Not during the *day*, I suppose," said madame, in a tone and emphasis not to be mistaken. Alice felt the blood mount to her cheek, but she could return no reply that would not have tended to commit herself; and rising hastily to conceal her confusion, she looked at her watch, remarked the lateness of the hour, and proposed to depart. Madame made no objection.

"Do not forget your promise," said she, as Alice rose to depart; "you must bring my little friends as usual, to see me every day, as I must not lose any of their company, since I must give it up altogether so soon."

Alice had not promised, but she had no excuse for declining; and she returned home more than ever dissatisfied with madame, and annoyed at the whole affair. She felt that, in listening to the remarks which were made on Lady Mary, she was acting a part, if not actively treacherous, was at least passively so; while, at the same time, her own reason rendered it impossible to disregard these tacit calumnies. The only alternative which remained was to acquaint Lady Mary herself, not only of the hints and insinuations levelled at her character, but of the effect these hints had on her opinion respecting her. This was no easy task, but Alice was at last fully determined on it; and fearful lest hesitation might again shake her resolution, she pro-

ceeded straight, on reaching home, to the apartment of her ladyship.

Lady Mary was, as usual, alone; she was seated at her work-table, but the netting-needles, with which she had been employed lay on her lap; she was leaning her head on her hand, and started as if from a reverie on Alice's sudden appearance. Her eyes were red with recent tears, but she smiled and endeavoured to conceal them.

"You are early returned from your walk, Miss Russel," said she. "It is a long hour before your usual time; but I am glad to see you. Come, sit down beside me. I have been in wretched spirits all morning, and a little chat with you will do me good. Have you been at your mysterious friend of the cottage to-day?"

"Of course. The children seem to consider it as their lawful prerogative. So in fact it is, for they can justly claim her as their own acquaintance. It is on their account alone that I visit her."

"What! I thought you were equally enchanted by this fair recluse. I thought you used to talk highly of her wit and elegance, and particularly of the kind attention she always showed to you. I hope no quarrel has taken place," said Lady Mary, laughing. "Come, come," added she, assuming a playful tone as

she patted Alice's cheek, "I have a notion you are a little enthusiast; but I must take your consistency to task, as enthusiasts are sometimes apt to be capricious, and I do not like those who change their friendships too often."

"Neither do I," replied Alice warmly; "and for that very reason, I should wish to avoid the society of any one who does not regard my friends as I do."

"And may I rank myself as one of your friends?" said Lady Mary, playfully.

"I trust your ladyship has not so bad an opinion of me as to think that I would continue to receive so many proofs of your kindness and friendships, unless I felt a reciprocal sentiment towards you."

"That means, little enthusiast, simply, that you would not hear *me* spoken ill of."

"Certainly not, if I could avoid it. But I should prefer, if possible, to be able to vindicate you. You must be aware that it is the most painful situation in which we can be placed, when we hear those we love attacked without the power of refuting the calumnies which we would shudder to believe."

"Now, I think I can guess what is the secret meaning of all this," said Lady Mary, putting her arm fondly on the neck of Alice, and looking on her face with a sad but expressive smile;

" now, do not equivocate; I see the cause of your excited reasoning. Has not Madame Durant been levelling some of her witty satire at my expense? and you, in your simple-hearted affection, feel indignant at her presumption for so doing? Is that not the case? I am no bad diviner of feelings. Confess it. I do not dread to hear the opinions of the gay world on my now solitary existence."

" Your ladyship indeed guesses rightly; but, contemptible as the slander of the *gay* world may appear, I would fain you were able to repel even its slightest whisper of malevolence."

" Alas! Alice, that would be an endless task. The whispers of slander, if regarded with philosophy, may be compared to the buzzing of gnats, which one may fatigue oneself in vain attempts to drive away, as they continue to harass and follow us as long as we remain in the sunshine of existence; but when that genial season has passed away, they depart and torment us no longer. I am content to bear without resistance, as in a few years the sun of my youth will be set, and after that they will no longer regard me as worth the trouble of levelling their stings at."

" But, dear Lady Mary," said Alice earnestly, " do you think that such an extent of philosophy is adapted for the present state of society? It might do well enough if we were superior to the

pains or pleasures of this existence; but as long as we are the slaves of the wants and feelings of humanity, I fear we cannot be independent of its prejudices."

"Justly reasoned—such were my opinions at your age. God knows I was eager to accommodate myself to the opinions of the world, and studious to humour its most bigoted practices; but, in spite of all, I could not escape its censure. I saw around me many individuals, whose conduct daily violated every rule of principle or morality, who were, nevertheless, received into the bosom of society and idolized as its favourites, while I, who had striven to regulate every action by the strict rules of virtue, to mould even my thoughts in the sternest of purity, found myself traduced, shunned, and finally branded as an outcast from social and moral existence. Yes, as an outcast; and those whose vices had first excited terror in my soul, were the first to point the finger of scorn at my innocence, and to spread the false allegations which blackened my fame. But it boots not now. I am a solitary being. They may level their shafts of malice even here, in my last retreat, but they will fail to wound one whose feelings are buried in the grave of her worldly affections."

As Lady Mary ceased speaking, she rose and walked hastily towards the window to conceal

her agitation. Alice was moved, and almost repented having alluded to a subject which seemed to have awakened such painful feelings, when Lady Mary, turning suddenly, advanced and resumed her seat on the sofa, and with a calm and kind expresssion, took the hand of Alice within hers, as she addressed her :—

" The unwonted emotion which our conversation has excited in my feelings must surprise you. It is necessary to explain the cause to you, who have always shown such kind interest in all my weaknesses, even though I am sure you must have sometimes deemed me a strange and fanciful person. To you alone I feel I could confide and hope for sympathy; for, although your good sense might condemn my errors, you would pity my misfortunes. Of errors, I confess I have many; but the misfortunes they have caused have been bitter and ample punishment. If you will listen to me, I will relate the brief history of my life. It may be of service in teaching you to avoid my failings, while it will account for my grief and melancholy, which must at present appear the result of whim and caprice."

" How can I ever sufficiently appreciate the confidence you have always bestowed on me!" exclaimed Alice, pressing the hand which was placed in hers. " Yet I cannot bear the thoughts

of intruding on events and circumstances, which, however interesting, I would always hold sacred. Do not, I entreat your ladyship—do not permit the candour of your friendship to do violence to feelings which it would be painful to disclose."

"I am fully sensible of the delicacy with which you feel scrupulous in listening to my story," replied Lady Mary smiling. "You are afraid lest you have in part forced this confidence, by your hint of the remarks of Madame Durant; but I assure you it is not the case. I rejoice in this opportunity of claiming your sympathy. It is the last consolation of the unfortunate to relate their woes; and I doubt not I shall find in you a ready and patient listener. But no more of this at present. I feel I am already too much excited to bear any further conversation. Forgive my weakness, my dear friend. Leave me for a short time. I will dine alone to-day. Come to me in the evening, and I shall be better able to talk to you. Until then, good bye," and, taking Alice by the hand, she kissed her with much affection as she rose to depart.—"Do not forget me," said she, as Alice was just closing the door—"I expect to see you in the evening—early—at tea-time—when I know you will be a patient and attentive auditor. Farewell," and she waved her hand playfully;

but Alice could see that she averted her head to conceal her tears.

Never did hours pass so slowly as those between dinner-time and six o'clock, which was the hour appointed when Alice might return to her friend, for such Lady Mary may now be called. It must be confessed, that notwithstanding Alice's fear of intruding, she felt curious to learn the history of her ladyship; for, independent of the interest one feels in all that concerns one's friends, there is a curiosity natural to all human beings, on every subject which is connected with mystery. The retired habits of Lady Mary, her habitual melancholy, her frequent allusions to some hidden cause of grief, and, more than all, the nocturnal excursions previously mentioned, all contributed to excite the interest and conjectures of Alice, who eagerly looked forward to the explanation which was to show the cause.

At the appointed hour, it may be believed, she hastened to the apartment of her ladyship. She found Lady Mary apparently waiting for her, seated by a blazing fire that shed a cheerful light on the apartment, which was darkened by the approaching twilight. She smiled, as she bade Alice draw her chair close to the fire, and Alice rejoiced to observe that her countenance bore no traces of the morning's emotion.

"You see I have made all things comfortable," said Lady Mary, in a lively tone. "I do not intend to frighten you by any narrative of supernatural horrors, therefore I see no reason why we should be gloomy and cold. I love the cheery blaze of a fire, and therefore if you do not object, we need not order lights, as this blaze puts me in mind of happy days, and enables me to talk of them more freely."

Alice willingly assented; and her ladyship, after closing the window curtain to exclude, as she said, all light but that of the fire, wheeled the sofa nearer to the fireside, and, seating herself, drew Alice nearer to her, and began as follows:—

"I shall not tire you with preliminary details, but will commence my history from the period when I first can date any remembrance of my existence—which period, as in most children, commenced a little before the age of three years. My earliest recollection of my situation, is living in a large mansion, a few miles distant from London, with my father and mother and several half-sisters and brothers, considerably older than myself, being the children of my father by a former marriage. My mother was many years younger than her husband. I have often wondered what could have induced their marriage, as there could have been no interested motive in

either as to money matters; and it was impossible for two more opposite natures to exist in the world. Both, however, were equally affectionate to me, who, for many years, was the only offspring of their union; and as children seldom make distinctions, on account of the characters of their parents, I was equally attached to them in return. My affection was, of course, not founded on judgment; and my mode of expressing it was in proportion to the kindness I received—not with any regard to the justice, or motives, by which that kindness was bestowed. With my parents the case was very different, as the affection of one was the mere impulse of nature lavished on its object without reason or discrimination; while the other, though not less strong and tender, was founded on the principles of justice and reason, and extended in proportion to the merits of its object.

My mother loved her child with all that self-sacrificing affection of maternal fondness, which in almost every case unites both wise and foolish women to their own offspring. She would have given up her own dearest interests for mine. She exerted herself in every manner to render me happy, and to bestow every enjoyment and gratification upon me; but she never paused to consider the probable effect of anything on my mind or disposition. If she could bestow pre-

sent pleasure on me, she thought not of the future, nor hesitated as to the means by which that pleasure was to be obtained. She exercised her absolute authority over my brothers and sisters, whom she caused to give up everything that belonged to them—playthings, books, or sweetmeats, whenever I thought fit to demand them; and without inquiry she exculpated me in every instance of childish dispute, however much I had merited blame and punishment. This system, it will be naturally concluded, would have the effect of rendering me tyrannical and unjust. It did not so; but I do not know whether I ought to take credit for any innate virtue in my own nature, that prevented such a result; or if I should not rather ascribe the prevention to the judicious and constant care of my father, who exerted himself in every possible mode to prevent the ill effects of such a system of education; which, although he was fully aware of its impropriety, was beyond his power to alter. Naturally of a mild and peaceable disposition, he dreaded the domestic jarring which must ensue if he interfered with the conduct of his wife, with regard to her own child; and therefore he limited himself to the study of the best means of counteracting the bad effects of a system which he forbore openly to denounce. By inspiring my mind with contempt for unjust

or selfish conduct, he taught me to despise taking advantage of those, who by circumstances were less powerful than myself; and, by showing his approbation of my conduct, only when it deserved such, he taught me to feel pleasure in doing right, much more than if he had endeavoured to intimidate me by punishment for doing wrong. His uniform affection and kindness made me love him; and my affection made me fearful of giving him pain. I saw that my conduct was of much interest to him. I could render him happy by behaving well; and I rejoiced that it was in my power to do so. Had he exacted obedience, or exercised severity, the case would have been very different; my mother would have, of course, violently opposed him; and I should have been taught to consider him as a tyrant—one whom, as it was a task to obey, it was equally a pleasure to deceive and oppose.

"As I grew old enough to be able to reason, I felt ashamed of the unjust partiality of my mother; and instead of availing myself of it, endeavoured to counteract it by every means in my power. Naturally warm in my affections, I loved my brothers and sisters with sincere attachment; and I could not bear to see them treated with less kindness than myself; and I not only interfered to protect them from evil,

but often refused to accept of pleasures of which they did not equally share. This gave rise to many altercations and disputes between my mother and myself, and frequently caused her to reproach me with ingratitude, for repulsing the kindness which her natural affection would have bestowed on me, to the exclusion of those whom it could not be expected she could love equally well as her own child. This was in some measure a just argument, and my own feelings often confessed its truth; but I felt a pride in sacrificing even my affections to the strict notions of justice and equality which I wished could be instituted. My situation was sometimes a trying one, and seldom happy. My mother confessed, and argued justly, that she could not love any child the same as her own; and it was hard that she should be prevented from testifying her maternal affection, in the indulgence and kindness which all mothers bestowed uncensured on their offspring: while I, on the other hand felt that her preference of me was an act of injustice to my brothers and sisters, who were deprived of their mother, and ought not to be allowed to feel that deprivation. Perhaps this feeling was heightened by the remarks which never fail to reach the ears of persons thus situated. I heard my brothers and sisters pitied for the loss of their mother; while various and

invidious comparisons were made between the difference of my situation and theirs. These remarks sunk deep in my mind, and I avoided with eager and jealous care accepting any advantage which might excite them, or contribute to augment the passive sin of which I was guilty, in being more fortunate than my brothers and sisters.

"It would be in vain to attempt to account philosophically for the workings of the human mind, or to discover the causes which influence it, and give rise to its various characters and passions. If not, mankind might in the course of ages learn, by experience transmitted from father to son, the method of moulding the nature of mind to their will. Ignorant as I am, I shall therefore not attempt to assign causes for the passions which influenced my mind, as it is only my intention to relate their results.

"One of the earliest resources and strongest arguments which my mother used, was that of proving, by every means in her power, that my father loved his other children in preference to me. I do not know if jealousy had been innate in my heart, but somehow or other it was easily excited; and, notwithstanding the impartial kindness of my father, I began to regard his attentions to my brothers and sisters as a proof of preference. I was preferred by my mother;

her preference annoyed me, it is true, but it taught me to expect the same from every one else; therefore it was easy for her to point out my father's *equal* justice and affection, so as to excite my jealousy. She reasoned with forcible arguments, even superior to my age. 'Your father loved his first wife far better than he ever loved me,' she would often say; 'and it is evident that her children are dearer to him than mine.' This argument was strengthened by the various remarks of idle persons. 'Mr. Mowbray is very fond of his eldest daughter,' one would say. 'No wonder, poor thing, it is natural; she has lost her mother, and he ought to love her better, to supply that loss.'

These remarks, founded on nothing but the desire of gossip, and which, although true, ought not to have pained me, gave unutterable anguish, and contributed to ripen the seeds of a passion, which has proved the bane of my whole existence. Jealousy is that restless fiend, whose poisoned venom is rendered the more agonising because instilled only in our happiness. It is not in misfortune that its maddening sting tortures the soul; but in the midst of the heart's dearest joys, which it delights to blight, mar, and curse, with a thousand groundless horrors, which deprives us of the enjoyment while it lasts, and leaves us, when all is over, to remorse and despair."

Here Lady Mary paused, for her voice failed her, she started from her seat, and pacing the floor with emotion for a few minutes, she resumed her seat, and again spoke.

"Forgive this foolish weakness; but when I reflect on the many happy hours (at least hours, days, and years, which might have been happy) which I have spent in misery, a prey to the torments of jealousy, my regret and remorse sting me to madness; but it is useless now, I deserve my punishment; and time, whose relentless hand destroys the hopes and pleasures of life, will surely obliterate, or soften by degrees, the bitterness of its despair. A few years and my summer of existence will be passed away. The wintry chill of age, which will furrow this brow and silver these hairs, will perchance blunt the feelings which now sting so keenly. But I must proceed with my story. I care not though you condemn my errors, but I would caution you to avoid them.

"I will not dwell on frivolous instances or events of my childhood. I had just attained the age of twelve, when my mother gave birth to another daughter. Whether or not this child would have deprived me of a portion of her affection I cannot say, as she survived its birth only a few weeks, leaving me bitterly to lament the loss of a parent, who, however she might

have erred in judgment, had been unbounded in her indulgent fondness.

"My mother's death was a severe shock to me at the first, but it was not until the violence of my grief was abated that I felt the full extent of my loss. Not only had she loved me to excess, but she had loved none but me; therefore her attentions and benefits had been confined to me exclusively. However I might have declined availing myself of the preference, it was still in my power, and it is an easy sacrifice to relinquish that which can be assumed whenever wished or required. The case was now very different. My situation, though no worse than before, was now without any alternative. I was equal with my brothers and sisters; but that equality was no longer my own choice. It was necessity, and I had no longer the satisfaction of regarding it as an act of virtue on my part to be so. It is true I had hitherto felt no wish to be preferred; I was no better than my sisters and brothers, and had no right to better treatment. This I had often even argued with my mother, and had always felt a secret pride in strictly avoiding all preference. But now, the power was no longer mine; my self-denial was no longer a sacrifice; nobody loved me better than the others. Nobody sought to prefer me, and the obligations and sacrifices I had formerly prided myself in con-

ferring on them, were now exacted, and received as a matter of course. This change was bitter. It had not only the effect of rendering me miserable and discontented, but it increased ten-fold the jealous feeling which had been studiously instilled by my mother; and in proportion as I felt the regret of her loss, I prized all that I had disregarded of her arguments during her lifetime. One consolation remained for me, and for some years after her death it was the only one I enjoyed. On her death-bed she had solemnly committed my infant sister to my care, and, with her last breath, she had counselled me to be a mother to her. I obeyed that injunction, in the fulfilment of which I felt a recompense for my own sorrows. Little Ellen, for so she was named, repaid my assiduity by her early intelligence and beauty, and more than all by the exclusive attachment she evinced for me. Towards her I exerted my jealous scrutiny to its utmost extent, to prevent any of my elder sisters sharing her affection. I watched over her with ceaseless anxiety, lest any one else should minister to her most trivial want or pleasure. My elder sisters forbore, in a great measure, from interfering with her, partly from a wish to humour me, I believe, and partly to get rid of the trouble, which I was so eager to undertake. But, as may be supposed, it was hardly

possible to live in the same house with a child without taking any notice of it, and Little Ellen was of course sometimes caressed and fondled by them. It was at these times that I felt the pangs of jealousy. A kiss, a sweetmeat, or even a kind word, bestowed on Ellen by any member of the family, was sure to excite tumults of vexation in my breast. 'She will learn to love them as well as she loves me,' I thought, 'and perhaps better.' That dread was insupportable, and constant wrath and disputes were the consequence.

"When I was about nineteen my father died, and his death caused a great change in our affairs. Although possessed of an ample income during his life, scarcely any of it extended beyond it; and when the little property which remained was equally divided, it was found to be impossible to keep up the former establishment any longer. All my elder sisters were married but one, just before this event took place. This was fortunate for them, as their brothers could not have supported them. Two of the three brothers being married abroad, and the other not yet established in business, the unmarried sister instantly went to her mother's relations, at some distance in the country; and a maternal uncle of mine wrote, kindly inviting me and Ellen to become members of his family, which it may be supposed I

readily consented to, having in fact no other resource. I therefore set off for London, where he resided, without delay, accompanied by my little charge, now seven years of age, whose affectionate and guileless fondness soothed my bitterness of grief at quitting my now desolate home.

"On arriving in town, I found myself kindly and hospitably received by my uncle and his wife. The latter was a kind-hearted sensible woman; but, as may be expected, my dependent situation rendered it necessary to yield to the wishes of my benefactors, whether they pleased myself or not. My inclination was no longer consulted. My uncle decided that Ellen should be instantly sent to a school; and, although the separation was very painful, I submitted without a murmur. I consoled myself with the idea that it was for Ellen's benefit, and thus contrived to reconcile my mind to make a virtue of necessity. My uncle was a man of property, which he liberally spent in the enjoyments of life. His circle of friends was numerous, and his house was frequented by the gay and talented of the higher classes. My youth and some personal attractions with which nature had gifted me, drew no small share of notice from the visiters who attended his parties. At this period I may date my first entrance into the world; as

hitherto I had spent my life in comparative seclusion, my father's fortune being always too limited to admit of much society. It was now, for the first time, that I felt any real evil effects from the jealousy which as yet had only been the cause of temporary pain or discontent. During the period of life which is usually devoted by girls to the acquirement of those accomplishments and graces which constitute the chief part a woman has to perform in society, I had occupied myself in a very different manner, having entirely resigned all other cares to that of attending to my little sister. I have already said, that my dread lest any one else should share the affections of Ellen caused me personally to minister to her every want. In fact, I took upon myself the sole charge of her from infancy, performing the duties of even the humblest domestic, as regarded her slightest comfort. I do not claim any merit for this conduct; for, although my affection for Ellen was certainly great, I believe it had less share in my kindness than the influence of jealousy. If it were possible to cure an error by punishment, I might have been cured in this instance; for I felt the effects of my absurd conduct in every possible way. My education was, as it were, to begin. It had stood still in its progress since I was twelve years old; for after Ellen grew beyond

requiring my manual exertions, I had devoted myself entirely to the care of her mind, and attended only to such acquirements as were requisite for her age. I now found myself in the midst of polished society, utterly destitute of its acquirements. I formed acquaintances of my own age, and it was evident they ridiculed and often despised me for my deficiency in the most trivial accomplishments of which they were proficients; and my leisure hours were now devoted to the tedious, because too late, study of what was absolutely necessary to render me capable of bearing my part in society, without appearing grossly ignorant or untrained. Youth and beauty, however, were on my side, and, although they drew upon me the invidious remarks of my own sex, they had the effect of supplying many of my deficiencies in the eyes of the other.

"I had several offers of marriage, but only one which succeeded in winning my consent, because it won my heart. Long before the object of my affections declared himself to me, I had secretly fixed my love on him, and my happiness was complete when he proposed the union which was the dearest, fondest hope of my existence. Sir Thomas Foster, for such was the name of my husband, was a baronet of moderate fortune; but I should have deemed myself happy to have shared poverty with him, for I

will not attempt to portray the all-absorbing devotion with which I idolised him. The love of woman is best known to her own heart, and the love which is deepest and fondest must be buried in its most secret recesses.

"After my marriage, which took place about three years subsequent to my arrival in London, I resided with my husband in this very house, where I now spend my desolate and joyless days. Here I experienced the sweets of a mutual love, the delights of the society of the dearest being in the world, the charms of mutual confidence. I fondly dreamed that those blessings would endure with my life, which I felt could continue no longer than I was possessed of the affection of my husband. Alas! my miserable solitude serves to prove the falsity of those dreams."

Here Lady Mary paused for a moment, overcome by emotion; but, hastily wiping a tear from her cheek, she proceeded—

"I must not lengthen out my narrative by useless reflections, which serve no purpose, but that of awakening regrets and useless repining. I was happy, truly happy, at the period I mention; and my felicity continued uninterrupted during the space of more than a year, which we spent here without any society but that of each other. That was amply sufficient; for to those who love as fondly as we then loved, it is useless

to seek any other enjoyment, but the mutual interchange of affection.

"My husband's fortune, as I have already stated, was moderate; with the exception of a very trifling patrimony, the yearly income from his entailed estate, his income chiefly depended on his mother, who had an immense property of her own; and generously bestowed on him ample donations, which enabled him to keep an establishment far above his own private means. She almost constantly resided in London, with her two unmarried daughters; but feeling the loss of her son's society since his marriage, in consequence of his residing at a distance, she proposed that he and I should return to London, and reside with her. Sir Thomas, who was warmly attached to her, and to his sisters, joyfully embraced the proposal; while I, foreseeing that the gaieties of society must deprive me of a great portion of his attention, felt less pleased. But I dreaded to oppose his wishes, and therefore freely consented. We proceeded to London, where we were kindly received by Lady Margaret Foster, and soon settled in her splendid mansion in Grosvenor-square.

"From this period, I may date the commencement of my real unhappiness. Call it causeless, or even imaginary, if you will; but the cause was sufficient, and the imagination as

painful as I can conceive any woe that ever existed in human breast. All who have suffered the pangs of jealousy, will confess, that of all the passions it is the most torturing ; because it never ceases to create its own afflictions, and constantly and diligently searches for grievances, which in every other case are sedulously avoided.

" I have said, Sir Thomas was much attached to his mother and sisters. An only son and brother is generally so. Until his marriage, he had never been removed from the closest intimacy with them, and their intercourse was productive of those constant endearments and attentions of affection, which close relationship alone can produce and indulge in. These attentions were anguish to me. Sir Thomas's love for his mother I might have endured ; but his sisters were irksome, and hated rivals in his heart with me. Our daily association was continually giving rise to this feeling. When he talked, his conversation was no longer addressed to me alone, as before, but alternately to them. They spoke to him of former days, before I knew or loved him, —of joys which I had never shared, and, consequently, could not care to recur to. Early associations are always dear to the heart, and I saw that he loved to talk of former pleasures; and my feelings were wounded that he should prefer

anything to me. In vain I strove to reason with myself on my own suspicions. He was still as kind, still as attentive as ever to me. But then he was kind and attentive to others also; and I could not bear that any one should share in the love of one, to whose affection I fancied I had the sole and legal claim. These feelings, as it may be conceived, could not remain long concealed. Indeed, on many occasions, I took no pains to avoid displaying my irritation.

"Perhaps it may seem an unjust assertion; but it is my opinion, that a husband's relations are the natural enemies of a wife. At least, my experience has proved so. The mother and sisters of Sir Thomas seemed to regard me as an intruder in their family circle,—as one whose rights could only exist by a usurpation of theirs. Perhaps, in my case, it was just; but not so in every one. Time in no way bettered my situation. The daily recurrence of events only served to increase my jealous torments, until I felt, in spite of all attempts to stifle the truth, that it was impossible to be happy, as long as my husband and his family lived together. Unable to restrain my feelings, which were exasperated by the total disregard shown to them, I was impelled to avow this opinion to my husband; and I declared my determination to quit a house where I was looked upon as a person of minor conse-

quence, and an intruder on the happiness of others. Such were my words, for I did not dare to confess that others intruded on my happiness. Indeed, that was a secret which I did not always confess to myself. Conscious, as I was, that the pangs of jealousy alone had the effect of poisoning my repose, I strove to persuade myself that the fault was in those who excited that passion, not in myself for cherishing it. I trembled after my avowal, as I feared lest I had forfeited the esteem of my husband by my temerity in opposing his plans; but, to my surprise, he replied calmly and kindly, by assenting to the justice of my proposal. 'You are too hasty, my dear Mary,' said he, embracing me affectionately, 'but I see the justice of your complaints. You are right; it is quite impossible to live happily here. A husband and wife ought to be exclusively devoted to each other, and the ties of relationship serve only to disunite them. We shall henceforth live for one another. Though I still love my mother and sisters, I shall arrange for the future, that my attentions to them shall not interfere, as it now does, with your peace and happiness. We shall quit this house, and in one of our own, you shall not be annoyed in any way whatever.'

"I could have fallen on my knees and worshipped the being who not only had conferred

every happiness on me, but thus unhesitatingly gave up all his interests for mine. I was moved and overcome by such unlooked-for generosity, where I had expected the most violent and angry opposition. Ashamed of my own selfishness, I implored him not to think of consenting to my proposal, which was, I said, the result of absurd caprice. But he gently soothed my conscience by taking all upon himself, and declaring that his opinion entirely agreed with mine; and that he had only waited for my assent to the plan, by ascertaining my secret wishes.

"In a short time he took a house at some distance from his mother's; and we were established without delay, in a home of our own. It may be concluded, that I felt happy now, having attained the summit of my wishes,—the climax for which I had prayed so earnestly during the space of nearly a twelvemonth, the term of my stay at Lady Foster's; but it is not always that which we wish most for, that gives us the greatest pleasure when possessed.

"My conscience smote me for having separated my husband from his family. Lady Foster openly declared her conviction, that I was the cause of his leaving her house. She was right, and it was in vain that he strove to reason against the implacable enmity which she conceived against me from that time. She refused to associate with,

or even see me, and my feelings were by no means such as prompted me to desire to oppose her decree. Yet I could not subdue the painful suspicion that my husband was secretly dissatisfied with my conduct. It was in vain that he argued with me on the folly of such a suspicion. 'If I disapproved of anything you had done or said, I would not hesitate to tell you,' he would frequently say; but I knew that I deserved disapprobation, and I could not believe that I did not receive it. My husband still continued to visit his relations; and Lady Foster was no less liberal to him, although she openly avowed that it was for his sake alone that she bestowed her kindness. And, strange perversity of feeling! for as much as I regretted having caused the separation, I felt pained even by the occasional renewals of intercourse which these visits still kept up. Every time that my husband went to his mother's, was an era of bitterness to me. I fancied that these interviews would be more affectionate because rarer; that the attachment which he must feel, would be strengthened instead of weakened by the limit which was set to its indulgence; and I pictured to myself the pleasures of the conversation, and the many endearments which would be lavished on him; all of which would tend to alienate his heart from myself, whom he would duly hear repre-

sented as a tyrannical, capricious, and cruel opposer of his happiness.

"I saw that Sir Thomas endeavoured to remove that feeling. He read my thoughts with the quick unerring eye of affection, and studied to prove their mistaken folly. He generally attempted to amuse and interest me by repeating ll that had occurred during his visits to his mother, and repeatedly assured me that my name was never mentioned but with respect. But this had no effect. The demon of jealousy was too strong in my heart. It was enough that he was happy in the society of any human being but myself; for I could not bear to know that any other person could impart happiness to a heart which ought to exist for me alone.

"If ever a heart was devoted to its affections, that of Sir Thomas Foster was so. He adored me with the ardent attachment of a lover, and the sincere kindness of a true friend; wherefore could I be thus selfish and insensible to his merits? Alas! It was the excess of my own affections that rendered me thus selfish. My heart was devoted to him alone. I lived, breathed, and existed for no other human being; and, in the depth of my own exclusive devotion, I expected a return of equal sacrifices.

"Jealousy is a passion which requires no cause for its existence. Like religious madness, it is

incurable, because no proof can be produced to convince it of its delusion.

"The visits before mentioned, became at length as painful to me, as the former constant intercourse, which I had succeeded to put an end to; and more so because I saw it was impossible to prevent them; for I could not, in reason, expect that my husband could consent to renounce all intercourse with his relations; and to have even shown any signs of displeasure, must inevitably have wounded his feelings, and justly merited his indignation. I therefore concealed my chagrin, but it weighed the heavier on my secret thoughts. Another bitter source of regret began to torture me. I had not then become a mother. Children are the strongest tie between husband and wife; and I dreaded lest nature had destined me to be childless. I saw plainly that the regrets and disappointment of Sir Thomas equalled my own on this subject, and I trembled lest his affections should be alienated from me in consequence.

"I had been married four years, and I began to lose hopes of ever becoming a mother, when my sister Ellen, who had been at school in France, came to town to spend a short vacation, and paid us a visit. She was now between twelve and thirteen, but of a delicate, tardy growth, and childish in her manners. She still

retained a warm affection for me, and our long separation and new ties had not diminished my love for her. She prolonged her visit for some months, and when the time arrived that was proposed for her departure, I found it was impossible to relinquish her. Her playful gaiety, her innocent cheerfulness had succeeded in dispelling my melancholy, and I felt that her absence would be intolerable. I proposed to my husband that she should continue to reside with us in future. He readily assented, as he had also become attached to her; and it was decided that Ellen should henceforth remain with us. It was easy to obtain the consent of my uncle and his wife, who, being now advanced in life, felt no ways vexed at getting rid of the cares attendant on her education, which was, by-the-bye, pretty far advanced. I had another reason than my own affection for urging the stay of Ellen. I saw that Sir Thomas felt amused by her cheerful gaiety. I saw that he caressed and seemed to love her; and, by giving him a new object to attach him, I hoped to wean his heart from his relations. 'If he cannot love me *alone*,' I reasoned, 'it is better that he should share his affection with those who are naturally attached to my interests than with those who would seek to alienate him from me.'

"Ellen was indeed worthy of the kindness we

sought to bestow on her. She was sensitive, affectionate, and noble-spirited, and evinced a quickness of understanding which gave promise of future talents. I was astonished at the progress she had made in her education, as she had already acquired a proficiency in almost every accomplishment. With exquisite musical taste, she played and sang with scientific accuracy and native melody. She drew with surprising talent, and her light graceful form glided with sylph-like elegance through the mazy dance. Her acquirements were chiefly confined to the graces, and as it was these of which I had always been deficient, I admired them the more.

"I have already said, I had neglected acquiring the accomplishments generally studied by the female sex, until so late a period that it was impossible to attain them to any perfection. *We* all know that to acquire those graces and accomplishments which constitute the physical attractions of our sex, it is necessary to commence their study while the muscles of the frame can be moulded at will to the motions of ease and elegance, and while the mind is unconscious of those cares and reflections which hinder it from devoting every idea to these pursuits.

"Sir Thomas was passionately fond of music, and he often expressed his regret that I had never learned it. He had also a taste

for drawing, and had made many fruitless attempts to teach me that art. He was delighted to find Ellen so perfect in both, and I was glad to bestow pleasure on him through her means. Ellen was my sister—my darling ; she was, as it were, part of myself; therefore, I rejoiced to see that he loved her. Of her it was impossible to feel jealousy; she was a happy, careless, innocent child. I rejoiced to see the affection with which she regarded us ; for my husband soon shared her love equally with myself. She bestowed a thousand artless and endearing caresses on him, as she called him by the name of her 'dear brother.' Every smile and caress he bestowed on her in turn was to me the same as if I had received them myself. I regarded Ellen as my own, and in loving her he loved me. To complete my happiness, I became a mother. The birth of my child, so far from diminishing my attachment for my sister, seemed to increase it, by rendering me perfectly happy. Nothing could equal the ecstacy of my husband ; and as he embraced his child, he expressed himself blessed beyond his fondest hopes. My first-born was a daughter. I proposed to name it after myself. Sir Thomas had often objected to the name of Mary: it was a mere prejudice; but I yielded when he laughingly opposed it. 'What shall it be?' inquired I. 'Ellen,' replied he,

smiling; 'I love the name, and your sister will be proud and delighted at the choice.' I readily assented, and my sister stood godmother for the babe.

"My duties as a mother now occupied almost the whole of my time; but I gladly resigned every other enjoyment to that sweetest of all pleasures. I was perfectly happy. Sir Thomas sometimes reproached me for confining myself so constantly to the nursery; but I declared that no pleasure was comparable to that of attending on my child. *He* could not sustain much loss by the deprivation of my constant society. Ellen was always with him; she was competent to amuse and converse with him, and I charged her to exert herself to do so.

"Before another year elapsed I again found myself about to incur another charge, as dear and precious as the first. I earnestly prayed for a son, as I knew my husband anxiously wished for one; but to our disappointment and chagrin, I gave birth to another daughter. I was grieved, but my affection for the infant soon made me forget my disappointment at its sex. I devoted myself with no less assiduity to its care, and my nursery became my almost constant abode. My strict seclusion was for some time enlivened by the company of my husband and

sister, who insisted on amusing my solitude even oftener than I desired; for conversation had but little interest, as it served to distract my attention from the constant care which I deemed necessary. I suppose they got tired of my indifference, and uniform occupations, for by degrees their visits became shorter and seldomer, until they were almost wholly discontinued.

"Sir Thomas kept a great deal of company, and during my absence Ellen officiated as mistress of the ceremonies at the balls, dinners, routs, and concerts, which were almost daily given at our house. When there was no company, he generally went out, and at my desire Ellen accompanied him. On this account, I saw but little of them, except at those hours when they were tired with pleasure and I with my own assiduous tasks. Another year elapsed. My children began to require less of my care. Little Ellen had now begun to prattle, and as I had weaned my youngest, I had less to employ me; but I formed a resolution not to mingle again in society until my children were of an age to be independent of any attendance. For a long time Sir Thomas treated my resolution as an absurd whim, and even seriously opposed it; but opposition only served to strengthen my determination. His arguments became weaker by degrees, until,

tired with contending against obstinacy, he relinquished the controversy and ceased to mention the subject. 'If I was determined to persist in my absurd whim of shutting myself up from all society, he would not contend against it; but he hoped I would not take it ill, although he did not follow my example.' No, 'I did not; I rejoiced to see him happy,' and I declared myself perfectly so, 'as long as I was permitted to continue my own plan.'

"Nothing strengthens any resolve so much as opposition, and mine weakened when that was no longer applied to it. I do not know whether I became weary of the dull life I had undertaken, or that the indifference with which it was regarded had the effect, but I began to long once more to mingle in the pleasures of society. I dreaded to confess that change of opinion. The desire of appearing consistent restrained me, and I feared lest renouncing my plan might be regarded as a proof of abated attachment for my children.

"One evening a large party assembled at a concert which Sir Thomas gave. The concert was given in the drawing-rooms, which were below my apartments. I could distinctly hear every part of the performance, and I felt an irresistible desire to mingle in the gay throng who were assembled to listen. I heard the sound of Ellen's

voice singing to the splendid accompaniment of an orchestra, and I almost envied her. She received the applause of an admiring crowd, who looked up to her as the head of the brilliant throng, which dazzled all eyes and charmed all ears; while I was forgotten, or if remembered, perhaps to be despised, as one whose homely tastes, and foolish fancies, rendered her unfit for such a splendid scene.

"My children were fast asleep in the room where I sat, but I felt no inclination to retire to rest. There was a new and feverish irritation in my soul which baffled repose. I tried in vain to amuse myself by reading or working. The sound of the revelry below smote on my ear, and deprived me of all rest or reflection. These assemblies were almost daily recurring; but I had never before felt any annoyance at them. To-night I felt inexpressibly relieved when the company began to depart. As one by one the carriages drove away from the door, I felt as if a load was lifted from my heart.

"At length silence reigned in the house; save the bustle of the domestics hurrying to and fro, and extinguishing, or removing, the lights and decorations. At length the well-known sound of Sir Thomas's voice reached my ear. He was ascending the staircase in earnest conversation with some person. It was Ellen. She was

laughing, and her cheerful laugh smote on my heart with a feeling which I scarcely knew the nature of. I started up, and stole softly to the door. My first impulse was to open it and speak to them, but I do not know what detained me. I heard them pause in the landing-place, before the door. I softly and partially opened it, so as I could look out unobserved. I had no light in the room, and as the handle of the lock moved without noise, they did not notice me. I saw them both distinctly. They were discussing the events of the evening. Something had occurred to excite their merriment, for they both laughed heartily, but I scarcely noticed what was the subject, as my whole thoughts were absorbed in the contemplation of their figures as they stood before me. Never did the form and face of my husband appear so graceful and faultless in my eyes. His commanding figure, the features which were moulded in all I had ever fancied of perfection; the smile which had won my heart—all were there. But my soul was overwhelmed with new and fearful emotions as I gazed on Ellen. Never had I beheld her looking so beautiful. Attired in the loose and flowing drapery of the evening's fête, her charms were displayed to all the advantages that taste and splendour could add to natural loveliness. I gazed on her with a newly-awakened sensa-

tion—she whom I had been in the habit of regarding as a child—a lovely but almost infantile girl, now stood before me a commanding and beautiful woman—a formidable and triumphant rival.

"A cold and sickening thrill pervaded my frame. My head seemed to swim. I grew giddy, and caught by the wall to support myself. The sound of my own name caught my attention, and restored my senses, which, for a moment, had utterly deserted me. I listened.

"Mary will be gone to bed long ere this," said Sir Thomas; "I had some thoughts of looking in, but it is useless to disturb her."

"Useless," replied Ellen, with a laugh, "it will be time enough in the morning; she would not care to talk to you now for fear of awakening the children."

"Sir Thomas laughed also, and his laugh struck my heart, as with the blow of a dagger. They exchanged the parting salutation of "good night." Ellen tripped lightly up stairs, and Sir Thomas proceeded to his own apartment, which was in the same suite as mine.

"No sooner did I find myself alone, than the stifled emotions of my soul burst forth with a violence, which required all my efforts to restrain. I flung myself on my knees. I buried my face in my hands, and compressed my lips to prevent

myself from shrieking aloud. I struck my forehead with my clenched hands, and tore my hair from the roots. This paroxysm lasted for some time, until fairly exhausted by its fury, I became suddenly calm. This calmness brought me to a sense of reason; but to a stronger conviction of misery. I rose from the ground. I trembled at the excess of my own passions, and glanced round the apartment with a momentary dread, lest any one had observed me. All was silent. My children slept soundly in their little bed, close beside me. Their soft and regular breathing was even audible; so hushed was every other sound. The fire burned low in the grate. A night-lamp stood on the table; I lighted it, and taking it up, turned to retire to my own room, which adjoined that where I stood. I looked on my children. Their sweet and placid slumber seemed to mock my tortured soul. As I entered my own room, my figure reflected in a large mirror, caught my eye. I started and shuddered. My face was pale as death, my eyes were wild and swollen with tears, and my hair hung in loose and dishevelled confusion. This spectacle added new torments to my reflections. I contrasted my own present appearance with that of the smiling, happy, and beautiful Ellen. As I gathered up and smoothed my scattered locks before the glass, I glanced at

my dress, and a painful comparison also suggested itself. I was attired in a plain and coarse morning wrapper, fitted close to my shape, without any regard to taste or grace, totally devoid of any ornament, or external decoration. My personal attractions, I must confess, bore but a poor comparison to the brilliant and commanding charms of my sister. The demon of jealousy was roused in my soul. The fearful suspicion that Ellen had robbed me of my husband's affections seized on my mind, though I scarcely dared confess that I felt it. I need not dwell on the tortures of that night; sufficient to say, from that moment my peace was fled for ever.

"To-morrow, and to-morrow came. I saw my husband as often as usual; but I no longer looked on his kindness with the same confidence as I had been wont to feel; and I shrank from the caresses of Ellen as from the touch of a serpent. I dreaded her approach, as her presence never failed to produce feelings so agonising that I trembled lest I might be impelled to betray them. I no longer took delight in attending to my children. Their playful smiles were painful to my over-excited and tortured soul. My former peaceful retirement was become an irksome and wearisome imprisonment; yet I shuddered at the idea of again mingling with society.

"My days passed in a thousand painful reflections, the prey to dejection and gloom; while sleep was banished from my pillow, by the torturing suspicions which were ever busy suggesting new causes of misery. I pictured to my fancy my husband amid the gay scenes of festivity, where he spent his evening hours, surrounded by revelry and mirth. I pictured him by the side of Ellen, listening to the sweet strains of her exquisite voice, or watching her fairy fingers as they woke the varied melody with which I had never charmed his ear. He would gaze on her graceful form—her faultless beauty, she would smile on him, and in the witchery of that smile I should be forgotten.

"I would not have it believed that I suspected my husband, far less my sister, of the slightest thought of impropriety. Such an idea never for a moment entered my mind. Had I believed them capable of that, I should have felt less of anguish. There is a sad but real consolation, when we consider ourselves truly injured; for there is some degree of merit in our submitting to that which the world pities us for, and, above all, a secret satisfaction in feeling our own superiority to those who injure us. I had no consolation. My husband was honourable, kind, and blameless. My sister—the world would have scoffed and hated me, had I presumed to doubt

her faultless innocence. I could not—did not, doubt it. I knew she was virtuous and good. I knew she was purity itself, even in thought; but it was even her virtue and purity that was the cause of my misery and despair. She was far lovelier than I; could I find fault with my husband, whose just taste must deem her such? She was younger. She possessed a thousand accomplishments of which I knew nothing, therefore must be capable of sympathising in all his feelings, and all his pursuits, of which I never could share. Could I complain because he knew and valued all this, which was so justly valuable? No, no—I could not blame them. It was fate. It was justice—I could not murmur, but I was wretched.

"I again found myself about to become a mother. With what different sensations did I look forward to that event, formerly so ardently wished for! I knew my husband wished much for a son. Should I give birth to a boy, I secretly hoped it might be the means of restoring his affections, which I now firmly believed to be alienated from me; but that belief dashed all my hopes with bitterness. My husband no longer cared for me for my own sake. As the mother of his children; as their nurse or instructress; as a useful or necessary member of his household, he perhaps valued my existence,

but no further; all his esteem—all his admiration, or affection, was fixed on Ellen.

"My own conduct contributed to strengthen this conviction. I became dejected and melancholy. I avoided the company and repulsed the kindness of my husband. Even the most ardent affection will be cooled by indifference and repulse; and if I had reasoned on my behaviour, I could not have wondered why Sir Thomas became less attentive to me.

"An idea suggested itself to me—that I would conceal my situation. The surprise and unexpected pleasure which the birth of a son, if Heaven should grant one, might have a strong effect in recalling his affection, and, with this view, I secluded myself from almost all society, save that of my attendants; and confined myself to my own apartments, where, under various pretexts, I refused the visits even of Ellen or my husband. By this time they were accustomed to what they justly termed my whims; and knowing that all remonstrance was useless, they did not attempt to oppose me. This, of course, I attributed to indifference and neglect. I must confess that, notwithstanding my plan, I was bitterly disappointed at meeting with no opposition. I had expected that my total seclusion would at least excite surprise or vexation; but it excited neither. All things

went on the same as before; my absence produced neither good nor evil. The assemblies were as regular and splendid, and my husband and sister mingled even more than ever in the gaieties of the world.

"My mind became the prey to restless and painful emotions. Incapable of employing my thoughts with any other subject but that which was constantly distressing me, I amused my otherwise ennuied solitude by creating a thousand causes for my groundless misery. I reflected with regret on the past, and contrasted it with my present situation; but I never paused to consider that my own conduct was the cause of the change.

"It now drew near the anniversary of my wedding-day, which was also that of my birthday. It was now eight years since my marriage, and when the day arrived I should be nine-and-twenty. Ellen was seventeen—what a fearful difference! In a few years I could no longer boast of youth, for already my charms were on the wane, and she was in the very spring-tide of existence. It had been the custom of Sir Thomas and myself to exchange some mutual present on this day—some token of affection. You will smile, but the idea recurred to me—it was some months before the time, and in all probability I should be confined

about the same period. What if it should be possible that I might present my husband with a son? That would be a pledge of affection which would ensure me of his gratitude, and perhaps recall his lost affections.

"Meanwhile, the daily and nightly assemblies, balls, and other festivities, increased both in frequency and splendour. My solitary apartment was invaded by the sound of mirth and festivity; and my broken and perturbed slumber was disturbed by melody and rejoicing.

"I never quitted my own room, except during the absence of my husband and Ellen; and my visits to the other apartments were generally stolen unobserved. On these occasions I met with a thousand causes to increase my jealousy. Ellen's taste for drawing was admirable, and the rooms were decorated by specimens of her art. One day I entered the drawing-room. Her portfolio lay on the table. I opened it. It contained a small parcel carefully wrapped up—it was the size and shape of a miniature—I opened it, and beheld a likeness of my husband. This discovery was a death-blow to all my hopes. A confirmation of my most fearful anticipations. I stood transfixed to the spot, with the fatal likeness in my hand. Such was the intenseness of my emotion, that I did not observe the door, which was opened, and the entrance of a person,

who stood for some minutes beside me, before I was conscious of his presence. This person was a friend of Sir Thomas, Edward Wentworth. They had been schoolfellows and college companions, and were much attached to each other. I was annoyed at being thus unexpectedly discovered, as it were, but I could not withdraw without exchanging a few words with one whom, until my voluntary incarceration, I had always regarded as one of the family circle. I hastily folded up the miniature in its wrapping, to conceal it in the portfolio; and to hide the confusion which my own conscious feelings occasioned, I proceeded, after exchanging the customary salutations, to examine the other drawings which lay scattered on the table. There were several landscapes, but no other portrait. As I admired a beautiful and finely-executed picture, I could not refrain from a sigh, as I exclaimed, 'What would I not give to be capable of drawing as well!'

"'Then why not make the attempt?' replied Wentworth, instantly; 'I have often advised you to begin. If you will but once try, I will undertake to teach you to draw quite as well, in the course of three months.'

"This was not the first time Wentworth had made the proposal. As I have already said, Sir Thomas was very anxious that I should study

drawing, as it had always been his favourite art. We had had many arguments on the subject; but as I had no natural taste for it, I had never felt inclined to take the trouble. But now, for the first time, I eagerly embraced the idea.

"'Would you undertake to teach me?' exclaimed I, eagerly. 'I would give the world to learn.'

"Wentworth laughed. 'This is a sudden change, Lady Mary,' said he. 'You used to say that nothing could induce you to touch a pencil. Sir Thomas will be astonished and delighted at this change.'

"That was exactly what I wished—to surprise and delight my husband, was my only motive. With trembling haste, I drew the miniature again from the portfolio; I uncovered it, and presented it to Wentworth. 'You could not undertake to teach me to draw like that?' asked I, in a voice almost inaudible.

"'To be sure; if you were willing to persevere,' replied he, instantly. 'I repeat, I'd undertake to teach any one, in the course of three months, at farthest; and you know I have always insisted that you have a peculiar taste in drawing, if you could only be advised to cultivate it.'

"This was sufficient. I had rapidly conceived a plan, and resolved to execute it; I as

rapidly proposed and explained it. I was to become the pupil of Wentworth; he was to instruct me in the art of miniature painting. It was to be kept a profound secret from every one but our two selves, until I should be capable of surprising Sir Thomas with some specimen of my newly acquired art.

"Wentworth at first laughed at my proposal; but when he saw I was in earnest, he hesitated, and seemed to consider gravely on the subject. In his youth, Wentworth had intended to become an artist. He had studied as such, and for some time earned his living as a drawing-master; until a large fortune, unexpectedly bequeathed to him, had rendered his profession no longer necessary. He had particularly excelled in miniature painting, and his theory was, that it was perfectly possible to instruct any person in the same art.

"I was surprised at his hesitation, for he had often urged me to become his pupil. I impatiently demanded if he had any objection to my plan.

"'Wherefore conceal it from Sir Thomas?' was his reply, 'I know it will delight him to see your progress and assist it.'

"'I wish to surprise him. I have my own motives. I am determined he shall not know until I can prove my success. You will not

refuse to keep my secret? I can rely on your promise.'

" ' But how shall we manage our lessons?'

" ' Perfectly; Sir Thomas is often absent from home. I can study all day undiscovered, and your hours of instruction can be chosen during his absence.'

" Still I could see that Wentworth secretly hesitated; but he consented, and our plan was soon formed, as I arranged it myself. He promised obedience and secrecy, and I hastened to put an end to the interview, as I feared discovery.

" My plan was as follows: My apartments were in a detached wing of the house, with a staircase and door communicating with the garden-gate, of which I always kept the key. I arranged that I was to let Wentworth know by letter whenever the absence of my husband presented a convenient opportunity, and he was to come and enter by the private way to give me the necessary instructions.

" After this arrangement, I returned to my solitude, wholly absorbed in my new plan. It was some time before I paused to consider the absurdity of the engagement which I had thus voluntarily formed, but even then the excess of my anxiety to attain my purpose overcame all scruples.

"I applied myself with eagerness to my new employment, and, besides the strong motive which stimulated my exertions, I felt inexpressible relief at the occupation of my mind, which had latterly become the prey of lassitude and ennui.

"I took particular precautions not to be observed, even by my attendants, lest my plan should be discovered before I had succeeded in its purpose; and never did young aspirant for fame look forward with more eagerness for the day on which his picture first was to be exhibited in Somerset House than I to the prospect of presenting to my husband a likeness of himself, equal at least to that drawn by Ellen. It would not be credited were I to describe the anxiety of my feelings and the ardour of my perseverance in this new study. It would be regarded as too trifling and contemptible a motive to influence the mind of a wife and a mother; but, fondly as I was attached to my children, I even resigned my attention and assiduity towards them in the pursuit of this new acquirement. Such is the force of jealousy; such the desire of rivalry in woman's breast. I wished to rival Ellen, and in this instance I expected to do so. Were it possible to exchange existences, I should willingly have resigned all my dearest advantages, even my maternity, the love of my children, for

her attractions, which I fancied had robbed me of my husband's heart.

"Under these circumstances, I was obliged to make Wentworth in a great measure my confidant. When two persons conspire to keep any thing secret from the rest of the world, it is necessary that they place full confidence in each other. The character of Wentworth was well known to me. I knew him to be virtuous, noble-spirited, and honourable, and I trusted all to his discretion. I was to blame; but I erred with the desire of acting virtuously. If ever a heart was purely devoted to one object, mine was attached to my husband; but my attachment was too exclusive. I claimed too much. I desired to be the sole object of his attentions, his kindness. Even his very thoughts, could I have controlled them I would. The ambition of this exclusive regard caused me to lose all.

"Wentworth was warmly attached to Sir Thomas, to whom he had shown many proofs of his friendship. At the early period of our marriage, he had resided for the space of many months with Lady Foster during our stay at her house, and I had always regarded him as a worthy man and a sincere friend. At the period of the separation which took place, Wentworth took part against the recrimination of her ladyship, and violently espoused my cause; since

which time a coolness had subsisted between him and the family of Sir Thomas, but with the latter however his intimacy was still as close as ever.

"During the hours which he occupied instructing me, Wentworth did not fail to remark the dejection and melancholy which was visible in my countenance. Delicately but earnestly he questioned the cause; and although I did not express my feelings, I did not deny that the neglect of Sir Thomas was the secret source of my grief.

"'You much mistake him,' replied he warmly, 'none could be more sincerely and devotedly attached to you than he is. Your unjust suspicions and absurd fancies pain him extremely, and your conduct causes a restraint and disunion between him and you. Your suspicion of his affections being in the least alienated is wholly causeless. Banish it for ever from your thoughts, and you will soon find your mistake.'

"This was frank reasoning, but it failed to convince me. Yet, had he reasoned otherwise, I would have instantly withdrawn my confidence. It was his opposition, his attempts to convince me of that which I most wished to believe, that rendered me anxious to express my feelings to him, for no other purpose but that of hearing them contradicted.

"I know you will blame my easy reliance. I fear you will regard me as imprudent, if not almost guilty, in seeking the friendship and aid of a man unknown to my husband; but censure the cause, not the consequences. Jealousy had separated me from every other friend; jealousy stung me to madness; and this rash step was in my eyes the only means of escaping from its torments.

"One circumstance gave me a good deal of annoyance,—the clandestine means which I was obliged to resort to in receiving the visits of Wentworth. I intrusted him with the key which admitted him by the private entrance before alluded to; but as I wished to keep the plan secret, even from my attendants, it was necessary to choose and watch for opportunities when he could come unobserved. It was impossible to manage this wholly alone, and I therefore intrusted my secret, and the whole details of my plan, to a favourite waiting woman, who readily entered into the scheme and lent me her assistance. I had two reasons for this confidence; for, besides the necessity of her aid, I wished for the presence of a third party during those interviews which, notwithstanding my consciousness of my own pure motives, I had still some scruples as to their propriety. However, the presence of Janette, who always remained in the room during

our *lesson* hour, completely set my mind at ease.

"For fear of discovery, Wentworth's visits were always towards evening, when the darkness enabled him to enter my apartments by the private way. Sir Thomas and Ellen were always either out or engaged with company, so there was little chance of intruding, and lately I had almost universally refused them admission. Our plan was therefore secure, and went on undiscovered. One would wonder what was the motive, or what could have prompted me to take so much trouble, and incur so much risk, for what required no concealment.

"My labours were unremitting. I rose by day-break; and, save at the hours when I took a hasty and solitary meal, I was constantly employed with the pencil. Wentworth expressed surprise at my progress. He was delighted, as it proved the truth of his theory; but the anxiety and eagerness of my own expectations so far exceeded the possibility of success, that I almost despaired of ever attaining my purpose. I wished to paint a miniature of my husband. I did not require his presence to enable me to portray his features, which were engraven for ever indelibly on my mind; but I found it a more difficult task than I at first even imagined, to transfer that image to perfection or even semblance on

ivory. I made many attempts, wholly unsuccessful. Indeed, a long time elapsed before I could transgress the law of Moses, by making unto myself the likeness of anything; and when I at last arrived so far, I was dissatisfied and disheartened at my first essays. The features were certainly portrayed, but absolutely caricatured, and bore no resemblance to the original. It was in vain I attempted to delineate that well-known smile, or to give that soul-beaming expression to those eyes, whose deep and speaking orbs had so often gazed and seemed to enter my inmost soul. It was in vain. A thousand times I threw my pencil from me in despair, resolved to abandon my fruitless task; but the recollection of Ellen, the miniature which she had painted, its striking and perfect resemblance! Surely I must be deficient in love to my husband, otherwise I might portray his features at least as well as another; and this thought stimulated me to renew my efforts. It was now within a week of the anniversary of our marriage. I wished to present him with this proof that my secret thoughts and lonely hours were occupied by the desire to please him.

"My health suffered much by confinement and application, but the energy of my hopes rendered me indifferent to physical pain. I was still dissatisfied with my own success; but after

various attempts, I succeeded in finishing a miniature, which certainly presented a striking likeness, even to my fastidious judgment. I was delighted, or rather satisfied; for my success had been so gradual, that its attainment failed to excite the rapture which it might otherwise have occasioned. I amused myself forming various plans as to the best method of conferring the pleasant surprise on my husband. Strange though it may seem, though residing under the same roof, we were almost entirely estranged from each other. For more than three months past, I had scarcely seen Sir Thomas. Ellen hardly ever visited me; but could they be blamed? My conduct was such as to estrange hearts even more strongly attached than theirs, if that were possible, and latterly I had avoided their society.

"As the day drew near, I began to feel somewhat surprised at Sir Thomas's not coming as usual to consult with me about the festivities which had usually taken place at that time. It had been his custom to entertain all his most intimate friends with a splendid fête on every former anniversary of our marriage—at the early period of which, I had presided in happiness and unrivalled ascendancy at these entertainments. Of late years, although I had avoided them, I was nevertheless consulted concerning all things,

and earnestly entreated to join them; but now the case was sadly changed. A few days previous I questioned one of the domestics, and learnt, to my astonishment, that no party was to be invited, and that no preparations whatever were ordered to be made. Though perplexed, I was not sorry at this. I thought of enclosing the miniature in a letter, expressive of my affection and repentance for any conduct which might have caused him to deem me unkind or neglectful; but I at length resolved to present it to him myself and explain all—show him the proof of how much my solitude was occupied by his image; and I doubted not to receive in return his approbation and affection.

"On the evening before the long-expected day, Wentworth paid me his last visit. I was to give the finishing touches to the miniature under his inspection. Sir Thomas and Ellen were gone to Almack's, and would not return until a late, or rather an early hour. A short time before the hour appointed for Wentworth's visit, Janette was taken suddenly ill. Her indisposition was not alarming, but sufficient to oblige her to go to bed; therefore I had no alternative but either putting off the finishing of my work, or receiving Wentworth alone. It was too late for the first, had I been even inclined; but I was anxious to complete the miniature, and

therefore, although I felt a little annoyed, I was obliged to make up my mind. Ten o'clock struck. It was the appointed hour, but he was some minutes later. I watched his arrival with more than usual impatience. He had the miniature with him, having taken it to procure a frame, of which I had commissioned him with the design, and furnished the inscription which was to be engraven on it:—

"'From an affectionate Wife, who, by this token, the work of her hands, would fain give a proof to her husband of how deeply and faithfully his image is engraven on her heart.'

"At length Wentworth appeared. As he ascended the steps leading to my apartment, I eagerly hastened to meet him, as I saw he held in his hand the precious miniature. As I received it from him, my delight at beholding my work completed, overcame all my temporary annoyance at receiving him alone. 'You, too, must write your inscription,' exclaimed I, as I entered the apartment with him.—'You know our clandestine plot is now at an end, and he must know all about it.' Wentworth smiled, and pointed to another inscription engraven on the back of the frame, which before had escaped my glance. It was—

"'Friendship proudly rejoices to lend its aid in the proof which unites love.'

" 'Generous—kind friend!' I exclaimed. 'Should this proof be the means of again uniting me to the affections of my husband, I shall never forget your disinterested aid, and heart-cheering counsels.' Wentworth grasped my hand, which I extended in the warmth of my feelings towards him.

" 'Noble-minded, but too enthusiastic woman!' he exclaimed, 'may you attain the happiness you merit. But pardon my censoriousness. I would have you learn, that happiness is alone to be acquired by moulding your hopes and wishes to the limited scale of this world's enjoyments. No felicity can be perfect—no affection can be wholly devoted; and, unless we make up our minds to meet with some opposition to our wishes, some neglect to our feelings, we must content ourselves with being for ever unhappy.'

" Wentworth had often reasoned thus before; but at this moment I felt but little inclined to listen to his arguments. I pressed his hand in mine. 'You have conferred a favour on me,' said I,—'do not 'annul it by your cynical reproaches. We have talked and argued about this sufficiently. Remember, I am no longer your pupil now.' He smiled at my unwonted gaiety. He raised my hand to his lips. I did not withdraw it. I saw his eyes were filled with tears,

and as he bent over my hand, they fell upon it. At this moment the door of my apartment burst open, with a violence which shattered the very hinges, and my husband stood before me—I shrieked in terror and dismay!

"'Traitor!' exclaimed he, in a voice of thunder, turning, with fury flashing from his eyes, on Wentworth, who stood rooted to the spot,—'Deny, if you dare, your perfidy, and meet its punishment! And for you, wretched, degraded victim!' addressing himself to me, and shaking me violently from him as I clung in terror to his knees,—'Touch me not—begone! if you wish not to witness the just vengeance due to your partner in guilt!' and, with these words, he drew forth a brace of pistols, and presenting one to Wentworth—'Stand forward! On this spot you shall vindicate your guilt, or expiate its enormity. Either you or I shall die!'

"I shrieked wildly—my senses forsook me—my brain whirled—I fell insensible on the floor! The fearful scene which ensued was spared to my stunned and unconscious soul. Why was it ever restored to consciousness? I recovered to a sense of misery and despair—my tongue falters—my brain seems on fire, as I strive to relate what I heard on recovering from my swoon. Wentworth was dead—my husband was his murderer. In the fury of passion he had

discharged his pistol, the ball of which entered the heart of his faithful friend.

" On my recovery, I found myself surrounded by my own attendants, who, with bitter lamentations, related the fearful tale. My husband was arrested, and taken prisoner for the deed. My sister was gone—fled in horror from the scene of blood. I was alone, the cause of all, left to madness and despair. Madness seized my brain, but brought no relief. The wild dreams of fevered insanity only painted, more rapidly and fearfully, the extent of my misfortunes. For more than two months I continued in a state of delirium, caused by a brain fever—at least so it was termed by my medical attendants—the crisis of mental anguish and despair. My senses returned; physical agony occurred to restore them. I recovered my reason to endure a fearful suffering; after a protracted term of which, I gave birth to a dead son.

" It was long before I gained sufficient strength to make any inquiries concerning the past; and even after I had, the attendants were forbid to answer my questions, for fear lest any excitement might prove fatal, as my life was long considered to be in imminent danger. At length, when I was considered sufficiently recovered to bear it, the whole was explained in the following letter, which was put into my hands. At the

first glance, I recognised the well-known writing of my husband, and, overcome by agitation, it was some time before I was able to break the seal, and read as follows:—

"'Unhappy, erring woman,—This comes not to reproach you for the consequence of your error; I pity, and therefore shall forbear to censure. This letter, the last you can ever receive from me, is intended to convey my eternal farewell. Henceforth, we meet no more. By your jealousy you have caused, not only your own misery, but branded my future existence with remorse and crime. The laws of my country have acquitted me for the murder of my friend; but my own conscience must for ever punish me for the deed. That deed was impelled by my own blind and headlong passions. Those passions were excited by your absurd and groundless conduct. I leave you to question your own conscience, if your actions were not such as were calculated to inspire suspicion, and urge to frenzy, one who loved as blindly, as devotedly as I loved you. But the delusion is over. I have paid a bitter price for being undeceived. I am convinced of your innocence; but the conviction came too late. I have ample proof of my own error, but it cannot be recalled. Wentworth is dead; his blood is on my hands. Does

it not also weigh heavy on your heart? Farewell! I once loved you. For your sake I could have sacrificed all; and indeed I have ended by sacrificing even the peace of my mind through the remainder of my life. Yet, farewell, is all I ought to say. Wherefore do I recriminate? it cannot recall the past. We must henceforth part; and before you receive this, I shall have quitted England. I have taken care you shall not know my place of retreat; for to you I must hereafter be as one who is no more. I have settled an ample income on you. I leave you to choose your own place of abode. The world shall not say I have injured you. Your children are still under your power. I believe you are a fond and affectionate mother. I believe you will educate them to be good and virtuous. Experience, I trust, will teach you to instruct them to avoid your error. Once more, farewell, for ever!'

"It would be impossible to give the faintest idea of my feelings on the perusal of this fearful letter, every word of which seems written on my memory with indelible and burning characters. It was the last, the final death-blow to my hopes of happiness; but the fact was irrevocable, and my mind, now sunken and crushed by sufferings, could not even attempt to oppose

it. It was the will of fate. For some time my senses were stupified by the anguish of the shock. A relapse was the consequence, and again my existence hovered on the brink of the grave. But I recovered. The wretched are not fated to die when they most loathe life.

" I need not tire you with details. The rest is already plain to you. I retired, broken-hearted, to this retreat; which I chose because it was all that remained to remind me of our happy love. My children were my only consolation; but for their sakes, I believe I must have put an end to my wretched existence. For them, alone, I lived; for them, alone, I continued to endure my load of remorse and hopeless desolation. But a bitterer, a more fearful doom awaited me. I learnt that Sir Thomas had quitted England, accompanied by his mother and sisters (who were fondly attached to him), with the view of settling in a remote part of Italy. The public papers, which of course had not failed to circulate the whole circumstances of the unfortunate story, with the most scandalous suggestions, were equally busy in giving motives for his so doing; motives, which, alas! seemed too true. It was said, that broken-hearted and conscience-stricken, at the death of his friend, he had fled from the country where he could no longer hope to enjoy honour or respect. Alas! these words were too

true, and my soul was penetrated with the consciousness of having caused the shame and disgraceful exile of my husband. That exile was not of long continuation. That noble heart did not long ache and bleed with remorse for the deed which erring passion had prompted. He died. The grave sealed that eternal vow of our mortal separation. He died; and my hopes —my heart, is buried for ever!

"Yes, he is dead; and I survive him. I still live; although there was a time when I thought I could not have passed a day without beholding him. I live, though I know I can never behold him in this world. He died. I was not near to soothe his last moments. Those who stood by his death-bed, and performed the duties of affection to his sufferings, they would bias his mind against me, and strive to withhold even the forgiveness of death. I, the cause of all his grief, the cause of the broken heart and remorse-stricken conscience which hurried him to the grave, was deprived of even one kind word, one glance of mercy, to cheer the darkness of my earthly doom, or plead my pardon in heaven."

Here the voice of Lady Mary became choked with emotion. She paused, and covering her face with her hands for some moments, remained convulsed with agitation too powerful for utter-

ance. Alice would have attempted to soothe her, but there was something too deep, too awful in her grief, to admit of sympathy; and she feared to increase by striving to check it. After some moments, the paroxysm ceased. Lady Mary raised her head. Her countenance was deadly pale, and her features set with the rigid and stony aspect of despair. Not a tear bedewed her ashy cheek or moistened her fixed and glassy eye.

"You pity me—you hate me," said she, in a calm, but hollow voice, as she took Alice's hand in her own, which was chill as death. "You pity a wretch who has lost all that is dear to her; but you despise the frantic fool who sacrificed all to her own visionary dreams and unfounded suspicions. Yes, my imagination was fertile in creating causes of woe; but I have lived to find my most extravagant terrors realised. Oh, Alice! I am a wretch indeed. I have erred, but my punishment has been cruel."

"You have erred; but wherefore talk thus of your errors? Your regrets are even more than your misfortunes. Your children are still reserved for you. They are dear—strive to find consolation in their affection."

"Have I not striven to do so? But for them, do you think I could have endured to prolong

my existence, when I had lost all else beside? But I can never dream of joy. Their affection is a reproach to me. Their very smiles are daggers to my guilty heart. I have robbed them of their father. If I die, they have none to protect and cherish them. I live, but my life is a burthen to myself, and useless to those around me. Penance, bitter penance, may inflict anguish on my frame; but cannot wash away the stain of guilt from my heart, or banish despair from my soul. Yes, I have suffered penance; or rather I have sought a temporary relief for my overcharged feelings, in its infliction. In yonder church-yard, I have caused to be erected a monument, sacred to the memory of my murdered friend and husband. Thither I nightly repair, where, kneeling alone on the cold damp ground, amid the graves of the silent dead, I pray to the departed spirits of these beloved victims, to plead my pardon with Heaven. Do not deem me crazed; though, alas! I have sometimes been almost tempted to doubt my own intellects, so changed and frenzied has grief made me. But I find a wretched relief in this infliction; it seems the only atonement I can make for those errors which cannot be recalled. Oh, if the departed spirit of my beloved and injured husband is permitted to look down on my humiliation, the tortures that wring my soul—the

anguish which tears my broken heart, would surely plead for my pardon. Nay, do not weep! —I am selfish, thus to pain your tender feelings with dwelling on my misfortunes; but your tears are sweet balm to my affliction; they speak to me of pity, of sympathy, which, till now, I thought was lost to me for ever. Oh, Alice! your soft smile and kind glance resemble that of my sister; but your laugh is not so joyous as hers. Your step is not so bounding and mirthful; yet it is long since I saw her—she may be altered now. She has become a wife and a mother, and as such, they say she is happy. She deserves to be so—may no remembrance of her unfortunate sister ever poison her cup of happiness."

"But surely she loves you," exclaimed Alice, with emotion; "surely gratitude, at least, binds *her* to you, in your misfortunes."

Lady Mary sighed. "There are few who care to soothe the solitude of one so wretched as I am. Yet I have sometimes thought that Ellen ought not to have so wholly abandoned me. Yet to her I also erred. She has other ties and dear affections now to claim her care; besides, we are far separated, and a correspondence would only be awakening a train of reflections which, for both our sakes, ought to be buried in oblivion. I have written once or twice to her; but either

my letters have not reached their destination, or she has not wished to answer them. She resides in a distant part of Germany, from which she will never probably return; and, therefore, we must be dead to each other. But I cannot blame her; my own errors are the cause. She is right to avoid one who could never be happy herself, nor allow others to be so.

"Yes, Alice, I have lost all,—all that made existence worth preserving. Remorse, vain and ceaseless remorse, is all that remains for me on this side of the grave. But a truce with these reflections. I have already imposed too long on your sympathy, by making you listen to my sorrows. It is not in your power, nor that of any living being, to soothe them; but the wretched are garrulous, when they hope for sympathy. Ha! now I remember what occasioned me to relate this tale. You told me that there were sneers and insinuations which I ought to guard against. You see now that one so wretched need fear for nothing. There was a time when, like you, I shrank from the world's censure, and crouched to obtain its praise. What avails it now? Praise and censure are alike indifferent to a crushed heart; whose only hope of rest is in that narrow house, where the joys and sorrows of this world are shut out for ever. If the shafts of malice could have wounded me, they

have long since spent their fury, and they are now levelled too late. The whispers of infamy, —the biting blasts of slander, came too late. They came when there was no longer one who loved me to listen to them, and when the hopes, which they meant to blight, were already withered for ever.

"Go, tell your gay friend, if you will, that the widowed and friendless Lady Mary Foster can no longer be wounded by the suspicions, or even the assertions, of all the slander that malice can suggest or propagate. It boots little to one who has lost all she loves, what the world chooses to say was the cause by which she lost it; and she who offers up her midnight penance amid the silent dead, need care little what motives the living assign for her so doing. But do not think, dear Alice, that I include you among those whose opinion I do not value. I regard your friendship too much not to wish to secure it; else, why should I weary you by this detail? If the history of my errors has lessened me in your esteem, the relation at least proves that I intrust you with my confidence. I would fain make you my friend, for I am very, very friendless; and as I feel that my life cannot continue long, I would fain secure the good will of one who would be kind to my children after I am no more. When I die, I know none else to whom

I would submit the charge of my orphan babes. You are young, but your heart is formed to affection, wisdom, and tenderness. I know that I am dying. This cannot last. The wearied prisoner pines to escape from its tenement of suffering clay. Oh, Alice! will you promise to be a friend to my children, and I shall die in peace?"

"Oh, do not talk of dying. I am as friendless as yourself. I cannot bear to think of losing you. You must live, to be happy in your children,—to be kind to them, and be rewarded by their love."

Lady Mary pressed her hand with a bitter smile.

"Talk not of happiness, Alice. To-night, beside the silent grave, I must feel and know that happiness is buried in the tomb of my husband. But I will not wound your kind heart. I will not talk of dying. Alas! I have long enough time yet, in all probability, to wish in vain for death. We will talk often together. I will strive to merit your affection, and when that is mine, I need not ask your promise to fulfil my last request. But it is late, we must part. I have already encroached too long on your kindness."

Here she pressed the spring of her repeater, which struck the hour of twelve.

"Go, dear Alice," exclaimed she with emotion, "we shall meet again to-morrow; but to-night, I must devote myself to other thoughts. I shall have need of your consolation and kind converse to-morrow. You have need of repose. Go to bed; shut out the thoughts of all I have been saying for to-night, and meet me again with your smiling face to cheer me."

As Lady Mary spoke, she took up a lamp which stood on the table, and lighting it, put it in Alice's hand. Alice would have solicited permission to remain, but she saw plainly that her company would be irksome. She returned the kind embrace of her unhappy friend, and withdrew to her own chamber.

CHAPTER V.

From the time that Lady Mary had confided her history to Alice, the latter became attached to her, with that affection which a warm heart ever feels for those who seek to win it by kindness; and compassion rendered that affection stronger. Willingly Alice would have devoted herself to the task of endeavouring to console her friend, and would have gladly relinquished every other pursuit to that of soothing and cheering her solitude; but, much to her regret, Lady Mary refused to be cheered or amused; and though even more kind and affectionate than before, avoided her presence with a caution and reserve, which at once pained and disappointed Alice.

"Do not think me unkind or ungrateful," said her ladyship, on one occasion when she declined Alice's offer to devote her evenings to her society, "I am truly sensible of your goodness, and of the disinterested affection which can make you willing to share the melancholy of one so little fitted to be a companion to you; but it must not be. I find I cannot make a companion

of any human being; therefore our friendship must not depend on our society with each other. You know my history. My hopes in this world are blighted for ever, and I should only damp and darken your pleasures, by linking you to my company."

It was in vain that Alice urged her earnest wish to the contrary. Lady Mary became daily more and more recluse in her habits; declining, except on rare occasions, to join even the family meals. She received her children daily, and at any hour they chose to visit her apartments; but she paid no attention to their education, and even seemed to regard them with less affection.

Alice was much grieved on that account; for she saw plainly that it was no proof of less maternal love, but an indication that the mind of the unhappy mother was absorbed on other subjects. Anxious to rouse her thoughts from the melancholy brooding, Alice ventured to remonstrate with her on the little interest she showed in the children, when Lady Mary burst into tears.

"Do not urge me to impossibilities," exclaimed she; "dear as my children are to me, the sight of them gives me unutterable anguish. Their smiles seem to reproach me as the murderess of their father. Oh, Alice! I know I shall not be long with them. I would fain wean

myself from them, for I have no other tie to this world, which I pine to quit for ever. I would have you consider them as under your power. Try to love them. I wish only to live until you shall have gained sufficient affection for them to supply my place. They will soon learn to love you; and the less they attach themselves to me, they will less feel my loss."

It was useless to reason. Her resolution was fixed; and it was too evident that her feelings were not the result of temporary whim, but founded on too sure reality. Her health was visibly declining. Her wasted frame, and the hectic flush which burned on her cheek, were alarming and unequivocal signs of some lurking poison in her frame, which would rapidly consume the thread of existence.

Alice attempted to reason with her, by every argument which she thought likely to dissuade her, from suffering herself to become the prey of that incurable melancholy; and far more, with a view of putting a stop to the cruel and unnecessary penance which the unhappy Lady Mary still persisted in inflicting on herself. It was in vain she attempted to argue the utter uselessness and absurdity of such a fanciful atonement, which could serve no purpose and recall no action. On that subject Lady Mary was inaccessible; and Alice was at length obliged to give

up the point, as her own feelings of delicacy made her shrink from intruding. But on the cold wintry nights she felt it almost a sacrilege to lay her head on the pillow, when she reflected on the midnight penance of her unhappy friend. More than once she resolved to follow her, and to endeavour by entreaties to force her from the fearful spot; but there is something that awes the soul and commands too deep a respect to intrude on such excess of sorrow.

Under these circumstances, Alice would gladly have discontinued her visits to Madame Durant; but the children never failed to entreat permission to go to the cottage; and as it was Lady Mary's express wish that they should be indulged in that pleasure, Alice did not like to oppose it.

"What does it signify?" said Lady Mary, smiling; "though this lady does not speak well of me, I have no fear of your opinion being biassed by anything she can say; and as to the children, by the time they grow old enough to understand what is said, they will hear many things to my disadvantage. They must judge as they please of me when I am no more, and while I live I shall not prevent their pleasures."

Contrary to Alice's expectations, and somewhat to her mortification, Madame Durant did not again mention Lady Mary. Alice almost wished her to have done so, that she might have

had an opportunity of vindicating her friend with a free conscience, but the name of her ladyship was not again mentioned. Meanwhile the visits to the cottage were more frequent than before, Madame Durant urging her intended departure as a reason for their accepting her invitations; and, somehow or other, Alice began to feel much more interest in her society than she did at first. Now we hope that our readers have a better opinion of our heroine than suspect her of any undue wish for the company of Madame Durant's son, though it must be owned that personage was no slight addition to her pleasure in her visits to the cottage. Contrary to the opinion which Alice had formed at first sight, M. Durant proved, on further acquaintance, to be intelligent, amusing, with talents calculated to render his society interesting, and even instructing. Either by design or accident, he always was present during Alice's visits to his mother, and generally took the lead in the conversation, which, although on the ordinary topics of literature &c., was always carried on with great energy and originality. M. Durant had travelled far. He had resided, during the last four years, in various parts of the continent; and the details of manners and customs foreign to our own never fail to amuse us. He had an exquisite taste in music, and Alice's talents in

that accomplishment were solicited, and often passed an hour or two agreeably to all. The attentions of M. Durant were polite and even kind, without being in the least officious or intrusive; and being a married man, Alice felt perfectly at her ease as to any chance of her complaisance and social good feeling being in any way mistaken. Such is the custom of society. Confidence or any intimate degree of association cannot exist between two persons of different sexes, except under circumstances which would render any transgression doubly criminal. A young girl may converse freely, make jokes, or even place confidence in a married man, without any censure or suspicion; when similar conduct with one unmarried would reflect blame and scandal on her character. Any one who reasons on the subject will hardly be able to produce a just cause for such a custom. However, in the case of Alice, there was no occasion for this remark, for her heart was already too deeply and irrevocably engaged to one, to run the least risk from any other person.

'Human love is not the growth of human will.'

—Such is the assertion of our immortal bard; and the most unpoetic heart that ever throbbed in human breast must acknowledge and feel its truth. Love may be, though it rarely is, founded

on esteem; but we all know that it still continues to exist when esteem is forfeited for ever. There is no occasion to bid our reader mark the countless instances that will prove that fact, for they are fortunate indeed who have not a sure proof in their own hearts.

Reason, pride, wounded and neglected feelings, might have all combined to have weaned the heart of Alice from Walter Deverell; but, alas! his image was too deeply impressed on the tablet of her affections ever to be obliterated, or to give place to that of another. Walter was her first love and her last. Yet she could enjoy the pleasures of friendship,—that tie which, next to love, renders existence worth preserving.

The time, though long deferred, at length arrived, when her new friends resolved to depart for London. Madame Durant had become impatient for the gaieties, which she protested were but ill supplied by the dull life she now led.

"One would think the air of this place had totally changed your character," said she, laughing to her son; "you were very unwilling to perform even the penance, as you called it, of coming here to take me home, but now you seem equally unwilling to leave it. How shall I account for such a change? I am afraid your lady has become somewhat impatient at your long delay. Must I write to exculpate myself?

In which case I believe I shall lay the blame on Miss Russel here, as I begin to suspect that she is the magnet of attraction."

Durant laughed gaily; but, for the first time, Alice felt somewhat annoyed. She had just prolonged her visit of that day longer than usual. She had been playing on the harp, and Durant was leaning over her and turning the leaves of her music-book. As her eye met his fixed on her, she blushed and felt confused, she knew not why. She took her leave rather abruptly, and as she proceeded homeward, began to reflect on the frequency of her visits, and the intimate footing she had insensibly placed herself in with Madame Durant and her son. She questioned her own conscience, which could not conceal from her that the society of the former was by no means the chief cause of her pleasure in these visits; and she blushed as she remembered how seldom these visits had taken place, and on how distant terms, before the arrival of Durant, compared to what they had been since he became an inhabitant of the cottage.

This reflection gave rise to others of a very unpleasant and annoying nature, and Alice secretly resolved that her visits to Madame Durant's should, for the remainder of the stay of the latter, be few and far between. The very circumstance, however, of finding it necessary to

form any resolution on the subject was another source of shame and vexation. What was M. Durant to her? Nothing. In that case, wherefore did she think it necessary to avoid his company? There was nothing in his conduct to render such a step necessary. Surely, then, some secret consciousness of an error in her own feelings had caused her to think of it. Wherefore should a mere jest, which had evidently no other motive, make such a deep impression, if there was not some truth in it?

Perplexed and irritated, Alice strove in vain to repress these provoking reflections, which seemed as if suggested to her mind independently of her own will or command. Absorbed in no pleasant reverie, she prolonged her ramble, sending the children home with the servant who attended them, and pursued her way alone in a contrary direction. It was cold, being the month of January; but the air was clear and enlivening, and though the verdure and foliage no longer adorned the surrounding country, there was enough of picturesque scenery and charming prospect to afford ample enjoyment for the lover of solitude in the beauties of nature. A thought struck Alice, for the first time, that she would visit the churchyard, and search amid the tombstones for that one where the unfortunate Lady Mary performed her sad

and nightly penance. With this view she proceeded in the direction of the churchyard of ———, which was situated in a romantic and solitary valley about a mile distant from the dwelling of Lady Mary. As the burying-ground was extensive, she walked for a considerable time among the countless and various tombstones before she distinguished the one she sought. It was in a solitary corner of the churchyard, at the end of a long avenue of trees which skirted the western side of the enclosure, and concealed by the drooping branches of a weeping ash, which partly shaded it. It was a plain white marble slab, bearing the following inscription:—

"Sacred to the memory of a murdered friend and husband. Their ashes rest far away, but this monument serves to commemorate the remorse and guilt of the wretched survivor—the cause of all, by her unfounded suspicions and frantic jealousy."

This extraordinary cenotaph was only comparable to the strange and excessive penance which had erected it. Alice read it. The tears started to her eyes as she thought on the heart-broken and incurable anguish of her who had dictated the severe and even unjust words—

severe, because the error which it censured did not merit the term of guilt, and unjust, as it served to perpetuate eternally self-accusation so bitter and exaggerated.

"Poor unhappy being!" she involuntarily exclaimed; "bitterly have your sufferings atoned for your transgressions."

A deep sigh responded to hers, as she ceased speaking; and, starting, she beheld Durant appearing from behind the tree which shaded the tombstone.

"This is an unexpected meeting," said he, advancing, with a smile. "This is my first visit to this place; but had I expected to find such pleasant company, I had not so long deferred it. I am writing a list of the tombstones which have been added to this churchyard since I last saw it," said he, producing a small pocket-book; "it is now ten years since that time, and I find many additions."

"A strange fancy!" replied Alice, smiling, as, endeavouring to conceal the annoyance she felt at meeting him, she examined the contents of the book with assumed interest.

It was a collection of epitaphs and inscriptions copied from the gravestones.

"I am somewhat an amateur in such things," proceeded Durant, laughing, as he took the book from her hand; "in my travels I collected all

the old inscriptions I could meet with, no matter what they consisted of. The gravestone of the most obscure individual was equally acceptable, in my list, with that of the most celebrated. I have an immense collection; I have half a mind to advertise them for the use of the lapidaries. But independent of my taste in the collection, I had other reasons for visiting this churchyard, as it has become the dwelling of many old friends, who have quitted the village of Matlock and this wicked world since I was here last; and I have no other means of hearing any accounts of them. Apropos, concerning my collection. This is a strange tombstone: the inscription puzzles me. Can you inform me what is the meaning of it?"

"The inscription explains sufficiently, I think," replied Alice, colouring. "Those who dictated it seem to have left little for doubt or extenuation."

Durant bent over the tablet and read the inscription. His colour changed, and an expression of unwonted emotion for a moment was apparent on his features.

"These words jar strangely with my recollections," said he, after a pause; "and if the best of reasons did not convince me to the contrary, I should believe this inscription was dictated by one whom I once knew well."

"Perhaps, you would believe right," replied Alice. "Did I know on whom your suspicion rested, I might perhaps answer you as to its truth."

Durant started. He seemed to have fallen into a momentary reverie; his eyes were fixed on the tombstone, and his countenance assumed an expression of serious thought.

"Did I believe that the remorse and regret which that inscription expresses really existed in the person who dictated it, I should think better of human nature than my experience has yet given me reason to do."

"Then I can tell you that remorse and regret does exist in her who—in the one who dictated these words—more bitter—far more lasting than that stone can record or retain; remorse—ceaseless and fruitless remorse—far exceeding the amount of her transgression."

"Hers did you say?" exclaimed Durant eagerly; then checking himself, he proceeded, "I begin to think my suspicion is just. Answer me truly, is not Lady Mary Foster the person you allude to?"

"She is. But I would not have you credit that inscription, which imputes to an innocent though erring being guilt, which cannot be the term applied to her transgression. I know her history."

"Not better than I know it," interrupted Durant. "I knew her once, before these events occurred, which I do not believe would have ever taken place, had her heart been capable of the sorrow or repentance which is there expressed. I knew Lady Mary in her happy days, at least the days which I suppose she now calls happy; but I knew her husband more intimately; and from him I learned the course of conduct she pursued, that in the end wrought his ruin and her own. I pity, but I cannot help despising her. She has lost all that was once really dear to her; but the fault was her own, and the disposition which led to such a result must exempt her from any real misery at her situation."

"How little do you know her!" exclaimed Alice, with emotion, and somewhat of indignation. "Lady Mary has a heart too sensitive to the forlorn and unhappy situation she is now in. Her errors were the result of too strong a sensibility, and therefore her sorrow must be the more poignant."

"Ay! In a certain sense of the word perhaps," replied Durant, with a bitter smile. "She is, no doubt, able to talk sentimentally concerning the affair. She will shed tears in profusion, and grief thus manifested will not fail to excite pity. But what would become of all your highly

excited sympathy, if you were to behold an equal degree of despair at the neglect of an acquaintance, the imaginary ingratitude of a domestic, or some indefinable and unintentional mistake on your part construed, into a plot for the purpose of wounding her feelings, and insulting her kindness? No; Lady Mary had too much grief to lavish on imaginary evils, to have much to spare for what other people deem real misfortunes. Besides, she has long had a fancy for the character of *victim*, and she will no doubt feel a sensible gratification at being enabled to sustain it with some semblance of truth."

"These remarks, however witty in themselves," replied Alice, struggling to conceal her indignation, "are ill-applied to one whose sufferings ought rather to excite pity than satire. I have no right to speak of the feelings of Lady Mary, but indignation at hearing them thus cruelly wronged, renders it injustice to remain silent. I repeat, you know little of her of whom you talk thus; did you know the extent of her sufferings you would respect them more. That tomb, and the inscription thereon, are but poor records of that anguish which consumes her existence, who thus strives to perpetuate and atone for an error which will soon be expiated by her death. She is dying—dying by inches, from the cruel penance and torturing regrets which she

consumes her existence in cherishing. You say you know her history. Do you think that her errors were such as to condemn her to eternal despair? to blight her happiness in this world, and even torture her with fear for the future? Yet such is her fate—and as it is not in the power of man to rescue her from it, surely it is unworthy of his heart to add a sting to her sufferings. Lady Mary is dying. Her heart is broken; but she does not have even patience to wait the decay of nature that must soon result from the anguish of soul which preys on her continually. She inflicts the most cruel and useless penance on her frame. Night after night she seeks this solitary churchyard, where, kneeling on the cold damp ground, she strives to atone by tears and prayers, for the errors which none but she herself would regard as requiring such atonement."

Alice had suffered her enthusiasm to get the better of her intended composure. She spoke with an energy unusual to her mild and gentle nature, and as she paused, she felt her cheeks suffused with blushes, called forth by the violence of her feelings, and the earnest gaze of Durant, which was fixed on her face as she spoke.

"Lady Mary must still retain her former fascination of manners," replied he. "I see she

has succeeded in interesting you in her behalf, and I have no doubt she feels all the friendship she professes for you, as her heart is sufficiently capable of good feelings, though their excess too often leads to bad results. Were it not for the affection she inspires, the faults of her temper would do but little evil. Had Wentworth esteemed her with less devoted friendship, he would not have assented to assist her in the scheme of her absurd plans of jealous manœuvring; and had her husband loved her with less of blind and ardent passion, his headlong jealousy had not impelled him to strike the blow which hastened his own death with remorse and despair. You say truly the errors of Lady Mary were of no great extent, yet trifling as they were in themselves, they led to fearful results. I doubt not that she bitterly regrets them; but I question, if similar circumstances were again in her power, even with the experience of the past before her eyes, she would not act as she did then. Could we suppose it possible that her husband, whom she so bitterly deplores, were again restored to her, would it be in her power to behave differently towards him? No; it would be impossible, he could not love her better, nor endeavour more to convince her of his affection; she could not alter her nature, which could never be contented without that extent of exclusive adoration which

can never be felt by mortal, or bestowed on any earthly attachment."

"Then you do not allow the existence of true repentance? You have less charity than I should have given you credit for, even towards an enemy."

"An enemy! How you mistake my heart! Or rather how little can my words express it! Miss Russel, will you give me credit for having no prejudice against Lady Mary, when I frankly confess that she was once the dearest creature to me on earth. Yes—I do not blush to avow it. I loved her—she was *my first love!* No man ever became the enemy of the woman who first won his affections. I met Lady Mary in the bloom of her maiden-beauty, as such her image is still present to memory's eye. Long years have elapsed since I first beheld her. Time has no doubt changed her; but those features are so deeply engraven on my mind, that no change can obliterate them. I have sometimes, in moments of weakness, longed again to behold her. But reason forbids me to do so. I fear that in the case of an interview, I should find myself somewhat in the dilemma of the poet,

'My heart in all save hope the same;'

for, in fact, I suspect that I argue against her

with the vain hope of deceiving myself, as I fear I still love her too well."

As Durant spoke he passed his hand across his brow, and averted his head to conceal the emotion, which, in spite of his efforts, was too evident in the faltering tone of assumed gaiety under which he strove to pass off his feelings.

"I believe my mother was right," said he, after a short pause, with a forced laugh. "I *do* certainly feel unwilling to quit this village, although I cannot pretend that its rural scenery or retirement has any charm for me. There is, indeed, another magnet of attraction; but for which I had never been here. But I will shake off this foolish weakness—I will quit this place to-morrow, before I have delayed so long as to render it more painful. Yet I would fain see her once—only once. After all, there could be little harm in that. I loved her; and there was a time—but what am I talking about? You smile, and indeed you may well think me brain-sick—moon-struck, or some such way afflicted. I entreat your pardon, for my absurd folly. An hour ago, I would have laughed at the bare idea of giving utterance to such a strain of ridiculous nonsense, as I find I am entertaining you with; but this unexpected interview—the spot—that tombstone—have recalled a train of recollections which I thought were for ever buried in oblivion.

But it grows late. I have detained you; permit me to see you safe home. It is the first time I have had that honour. Do not refuse me, as it will be the last." As he spoke, he offered his arm to Alice, who, knowing no excuse by which she could decline it, accepted the offer. They turned to depart, when a slight rustle among the branches of the tree startled them. They both looked round in the direction from which the sound proceeded, and beheld Lady Mary Foster advancing towards the tombstone which they had just quitted. Her eyes were fixed on the ground; but, raising them, she beheld Alice and her companion, who stood at a short distance. For a moment she gazed on the latter with a fixed and dilated eye. Her cheek became deadly pale. She uttered a piercing shriek, and fell senseless to the earth.

Terror and amazement so completely overwhelmed and confused Alice's senses, that for some time the whole appeared as a dream; nor was her surprise lessened when she beheld Durant, who had sprung forward at the first instant, kneeling on the ground, supporting the inanimate form of Lady Mary in his arms, while he embraced her with the most fervent expressions of love and despair, as he vainly strove to recall her to consciousness.

"Look up—oh, look once again on me:

Mary, my dear—my beloved *wife!* look up, and let one glance prove your forgiveness."

Lady Mary did look up. The sound of a well-known voice seemed to have recalled her spirit from its temporary forgetfulness. Yes, that was a voice whose accents she had never hoped again to hear on earth; and, as they reached her stunned senses, seemed like some heavenly summons to a higher and better world. He who clasped her to his bosom, was one long loved and wept as lost for ever—she was in the arms of *her husband.*

As she reopened her languid eyes, Lady Mary fixed them full on the face of him who anxiously bent over her; and again closing them, she covered her face with her hands, exclaiming, in an accent of heart-rending despair—"Where, where am I?—am I mad?—or has some fiend come to torture me with mockery of my despair?"

"Neither, Mary,—my own poor girl! Oh, look again on me! By those tears—by that dear, altered face—by all the vows we once pledged! I implore you to recognise and forgive me. I am he whom you once loved—he who was once happy in your affection. We have been long, long parted. I have tried your heart too severely; but do not deny me the atonement I would now make."

Lady Mary started to her feet; her frame seemed as if inspired by some powerful feeling, which overcame all weakness or surprise. She stood erect, her hands clasped, and her eyes fixed with wild and glassy stare on that form which stood before her as a spectre risen from the tomb.

"Off!—touch me not!" shrieked she with vehemence, as he endeavoured to again embrace her. "Avaunt! cruel, mocking fiend! What! would you sport with a wretch's despair? Avaunt with that form!—he is dead, dead, and you would have me believe I behold him! Oh, God! wherefore am I thus accursed, that the ministers of hell torture me in my madness?" and again pressing her hands to her brow, she shrieked with convulsive emotion.

"God, merciful God! what have I done?" exclaimed he in the accents of despair; while Alice, who till now had stood by an astonished spectator, advanced to her poor friend, who had sunk exhausted on a grave.

"You have killed her!—she is dead!" exclaimed Alice, in an agony of terror, as she raised the apparently lifeless form. The face of Lady Mary was ashy pale; her closed eyes and pulseless heart seemed as if she was really gone for ever. But it was a momentary suspension of every faculty: the very pulsation of life was

still; but a few moments recalled her, and leaning her head on Alice's bosom, she burst into a flood of tears.

Rejoiced at this happy token of recovery, Alice made a sign to the newly and yet hardly-declared husband, to conceal himself for a space; while, addressing herself to Lady Mary, she endeavoured to recall her to reflection by the most soothing and gentle attentions.

"Where am I?—what means this?" exclaimed the poor sufferer, raising her head, and looking around with wild and tearful glance. "Oh, Alice, my brain is surely wild? I have had a fearful vision, yet it could not be all a dream. This scene proves that part must be reality. I came hither—but wherefore are you here? I fancied just now that I beheld one, whose form could never have stood before me in this world. Oh, Alice, I will not profane his sacred name with my dreams of insanity; but it was a cruel vision, and my mind is still confused. Let me lean on your bosom. I will collect my scattered senses, and overcome this wild fancy; yet, even now, oh, surely I am not all dreaming? Not a moment seems to have elapsed since he stood before me. Wretch!—miserable wretch that I am, the visions of my tortured brain mock my despair!"

"It is no vision!" exclaimed the agitated Sir

Thomas, who, in spite of Alice's imploring gesture to restrain him, stood forward, and in a moment knelt at the feet of his wife.—"He who kneels to solicit your pardon, is indeed your repentant and long-lost husband, who now bitterly regrets the sufferings he has too long imposed on your too kind and sensitive heart. Mary—my long-suffering, still adored wife!—oh, look on me, and tell me, in your sweet and well-known accents, if you will pardon and receive me again in your affections?"

"Pardon!—oh, talk not thus—what means this strange vision? Can it be?—do I behold you? What! do I again touch that hand? It is warm—life's blood is there. Surely I am dreaming? Oh, explain all and instantly, lest my over-excited brain again become frantic! Tell me all. Whence come you?—wherefore are you permitted to revisit the land of the living?—you, whom I have wept as dead! No, no: it cannot be. Alice, dear Alice, help me—take me from this fearful place!"

"Calm yourself, my own beloved Mary," exclaimed her husband, as, rising from the ground, he embraced her with the fondest affection.—"Let this kiss—this living pressure of these arms, which were wont to clasp you so fondly, prove that I am no spirit, but an inhabitant still of this earthly world, which holds for me no

dearer being than yourself. You have been too long deceived. I sought to prove your affection. You have proved it too well. That altered form, this pale cheek, bears too evident sign that you have grieved for my fancied loss. But it is all over. I have returned to undeceive you, and to re-proffer at your feet a heart which has never ceased to love you—nay, look not so wildly and earnestly in my face. I am no ghastly spectre, though I doubt not you think me a little changed since we parted. My heart is still the same, Mary,—it still loves you, though my conduct may have seemed as if I did not; but yours will atone for it. You have proved your faith too dearly."

"It is, then, no dream? Oh, look on me—let me gaze on that face which I never again hoped to behold. How shall I return thanks to Heaven, for bliss so unhoped for! But it was a cruel deception. I have, indeed, suffered much; but I deserved it all. Wentworth!—ill-fated friend!——"

"Mary, name him not!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, with emotion. "Forbear to recall remorse which has already cost us so much. Alice! for such I must call you, I must have you congratulate your friend on this unlooked-for meeting. You, who so lately could plead with such eloquence in her cause; you seem to

have lost all words to sympathise in her happiness. Yes, embrace her, dear Mary. She is indeed a true friend. She is the first and only one who has spoken in your cause. In fact, had I not been previously resolved to discover myself, her eloquence in your behalf must have caused me to determine on doing so."

Lady Mary threw her arms round the neck of Alice, who, overcome by this extraordinary and touching scene, wept with unrestrained emotion. One long and fond embrace seemed to unite more closely that friendship before pledged, and now consecrated by an event so happy to all:—an embrace which was only equalled in fervency by that with which the long-parted and reunited husband and wife once more clasped in each other's arms, never to be parted until death.

CHAPTER VI.

The preceding events may perhaps have appeared somewhat too romantic, or even improbable, to our readers, which cannot be wondered at, as even those to whom these events occurred could scarcely credit their reality.

To Lady Mary, who found herself so unexpectedly and incredibly restored to the affections of one whom she had for years deplored as dead, the whole appeared for some time as a dream; and even in the midst of her happiness, even at the moment when she presented her children to their father, when she taught them to pronounce that sacred name, she could scarcely believe that such felicity was really her lot.

Alice, a passive observer in the unexpected event, could hardly reconcile her belief in such an unusual romance in real life, which she herself had witnessed; but need it be doubted that she sympathised in the joy of her friend, for whose misfortunes she had felt so deeply, and whom she beheld snatched from the verge of despair and death, to happiness and domestic felicity?

The whole circumstance is easily explained;

though probably fully understood by the foregoing chapter, as our readers cannot have failed to discover in Durant the husband of Lady Mary Foster, whose history has been already related. His alleged death was a report circulated by himself, with a view at first of proving the repentance of his wife, for whom he still entertained a strong affection, strengthened, rather than diminished, by the unhappy events which had preceded their separation. It is true that at the first moment of his resolution of parting from her, he had felt much incensed and alienated by the fearful catastrophe which her conduct had unintentionally caused; but time and absence had cooled his anger, in the same measure as it had softened the remorse which for some time tortured his heart, with inexpressible bitterness, at the death of Wentworth.

Time softens all afflictions. Sir Thomas Foster was still a young man. His wife, though erring, was pure and blameless. She was a lovely and, to him, an affectionate woman. She was the mother of his children. Her error originated in the excess of her love, and she had been bitterly punished. Can it be wondered at, that his heart yearned to see and forgive her? If time had taught him to forgive himself, surely she deserved equal clemency.

For some time after the report of his death,

Sir Thomas, who was then residing in India, proposed to return to England. Wearied by a self-imposed exile, he longed to revisit his native land, and learn the fate of his children. The opposition of his mother, who urged the certain sacrifice of happiness which must be the result of a reunion with Lady Mary, for a considerable time deterred him; but at length he determined on returning to England, which he accordingly did; but he resolved to remain incognito, until he should learn the effect of all changes which might have taken place during his absence; and by observing what regret was placed upon his supposed death, be better able to judge of the affection of his former friends.

Lady Foster, though strongly, and perhaps too justly, prejudiced against the wife of her son, possessed sufficient good sense and feeling to forbear opposing what, she began to see plainly, was the only means of securing his happiness, but she urged with reason the propriety of ascertaining the extent of Lady Mary's regard for him, before he should discover his existence, or seek a reunion with her.

"How do you know," said she, with a smile, "that the information of your being still alive will be any satisfaction to her? It is perhaps unfair to judge; but I am inclined to suspect she will not be so overjoyed as you imagine.

What would you say if another has taken your place in that heart which you fancy is so devoted to your memory? and that instead of welcoming a husband, and the father of her children, she will be horror-struck at an intruder upon the rights of one whom she had elected as both?"

These, and similar arguments, were harassing and painful to Sir Thomas; the more especially as he dreaded lest they might be too true; but Lady Foster was willing enough to forward his scheme, and he consented to defer his eclaircissement until she should be satisfied. The rest is already known. The recluse and mysterious Madame Durant, was no other than the mother of Sir Thomas; who consented to reside *incognito* where she might obtain information respecting Lady Mary, by which, and a close observance of her actions, she might be enabled to judge whether or not her regrets and affections were as strong and unchanged as the anxious and trusting husband fondly wished to find them.

In the gay and entertaining Durant, Alice would never have discovered the exiled and unhappy husband of her friend, even though she had not deemed him long since removed from the land of the living, neither in the careless, though sometimes sportive, indifference with which he listened to the prattle of Ellen and Amy Foster, could she have detected the fond

and anxious interest of a father, which, beneath this cold disguise, yearned and overflowed in his heart.

All now, however, was happiness, unfeigned and undisguised; nor did Madame Durant, in her new and real character, refuse to lay aside her former harshness of feeling, which had been expressed at times against her repentant daughter-in-law. For, as she embraced her darling grand-children, she could not have loved them the less for their resemblance to their mother.

The pleasure of witnessing the happiness of others is, to a generous heart, the next to being in itself happy, and Alice felt in this instance more sincere and true enjoyment than had fallen to her lot since those days when she lived but to be loved.

Many months passed away, during which she continued a member of that newly-united and happy circle, respected and beloved by its kind members. A few weeks after the events of our last chapter, the whole party, Lady Foster, Sir Thomas, and Lady Mary, accompanied by Alice, and the little ones, who were still much attached to her, agreed, at the proposal of Lady Foster, to visit the scene of the unexpected meeting.

"I must see the site of your now abandoned penance," said she, smiling kindly to her daugh-

ter-in-law; "and you must not refuse to accompany me, else I shall say you are not cured of your old jealousy."

Lady Mary consented. On arriving at the churchyard, to her surprise, she beheld the same marble tombstone, but bearing a different inscription, which she read as follows:—

"This monument, erected to the memory of a beloved husband, mourned mistakenly as dead, now commemorates the reunion of that love which could endure beyond the grave."

"There, beloved!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, embracing her with affection, "let these words remain as the indelible witness of our affection, so dearly proved, and so happily united."

Happiness is fleeting. It were to be hoped that sorrow should be the same; although experience vouches to the contrary. Yet the hours which are spent in grief, are not in reality any longer than those of joy; though the regrets which follow the departure of the latter, cause us to think that their stay was of shorter duration. Be that as it may, it was certain that the last few months of our heroine's life seemed to pass so swiftly, that she could scarcely believe that half that time had really elapsed; when she received a letter from her friend Emma, now Mrs. Maxwell, reproaching her for having neglected to answer one which bore the date of

December, while it was now far advanced in the month of May. This letter, although complaining of neglect, was full of affection, and written in a strain of melancholy, which not a little alarmed Alice, who had not forgotten the information which her friend had given her in former epistles, that she had hopes of becoming a mother. That period must be near at hand; and the depressed and even gloomy strain of her expressions, augered poorly of her health. Alice was solicitous to be informed on that point; and therefore she wrote a long and anxious letter, entreating an answer relative to every circumstance concerning the state of her friend. She received an answer in course of post, in which Emma admitted the fact of being unusually dejected, which she said was calculated to injure her health. She wished much to be able to overcome it; and the presence of her friend was the most likely means by which she would be enabled to shake off the foolish fears and absurd forebodings which had taken such undue possession of her mind. Such was the tenour, and she ended her letter with an earnest and almost imploring request, that Alice would come to her, and attend her in her hour of trial, which was fast approaching.

"Oh, do not refuse me, dear friend!" were her words; "Come to me, for indeed I have

need of your consolation; and if I die, your kind heart will be soothed by having granted my last request."

This was an appeal which no one could have resisted; far less one so much attached by every claim of love and gratitude as Alice was to her friend. Therefore, it may be supposed, she did not hesitate an instant to obey the summons, although it was not without regret that she parted from those kind friends, with whom she now felt herself united by ties little short of relationship. Humanity and good feeling forbade them even to murmur at her departure; but one and all enforced a solemn promise of return in as short time as possible. Upon this condition Alice quitted her now happy home, and departed for Bath,—whither we must now accompany her to the residence of her friend.

It was late in the evening when she reached that town; but a hackney-coach soon took her to the house of Mr. Maxwell, which was in one of the principal streets. The fatigue of the journey, the anxiety of her mind,—all was forgotten as she pictured to herself the joyous and happy meeting with her dear friend. She had written to apprise them of her arrival; but as it was not certain to the very hour, her coming that evening might not be looked for, and, consequently, it would be the more agreeable a surprise to

Emma. On gaining admission, she scarcely waited to inquire for her friend, or to give her own name; but, with a quick step and bounding heart, hastened up stairs, to the room where the servant said Mrs. Maxwell was seated. In a moment she rushed forward to embrace Emma, who received her with open arms; and it was not until the fervent embrace was again and again repeated, that she paused to consider the fearful and startling change which had taken place on her friend. The features of Emma were, indeed, unaltered. Her smile was still the same, although even more affectionate and kind than ever; but a ghastly paleness had taken place of that once healthy complexion. Her form, notwithstanding her situation, was emaciated to a degree at once alarming and painful to look upon. Her eyes, sunken and lustreless, no longer beamed with that animation of soul which was her only claim to beauty; and her voice, hollow and broken, sounded with unearthly accents to Alice, as she fondly endeavoured to welcome her.

"You are kind, too kind, my dear friend," said she; "but you know I am a poor hand at expressing my gratitude, and, therefore, I shall not attempt to do so; my father, who is now with us, will, perhaps, express it for me. He has wished much for you, and will be delighted

at your arrival. He is at present with Mr. Maxwell, at the office. They will not return until an hour or so hence; but I doubt not we shall find plenty to talk about until then. I have many questions to ask you; and you look as if you would inquire much of me. You look earnestly in my face, dear Alice. Do you think I am greatly changed? Do not deny it. I know it myself, but I am not changed in my love for you. How have you been since we parted? You must tell me all your adventures. I must even hear over again that strange romance you wrote to me about that Lady Mary. I could scarcely credit it, and must know all the circumstances. Sit down beside me. You are not changed; I can see no difference, except for the better. Yet it is long since we parted. When you said in your last letter that time had flown swiftly, I contrasted my own feelings, which jarred strangely with that remark; for to me it seems as if years had elapsed since that time. But I am much changed. How is your dear mother? It is long since I heard from her; but I dare say you and she correspond regularly enough."

"Dear Emma, do not fatigue yourself by talking. I shall tell you all that is likely to amuse or interest you, when we find leisure; but you must not agitate yourself. You are pale.

How thin and altered you are! I am sure you must be suffering much."

"Nay, you are as bad as papa. Do you know he has taken it in his head that I am very ill, and I believe he has persuaded me of it; for I fancy I am so. I know I am changed. You must not be angry with my foolish whim, but I cannot help thinking myself dying. That idea has long had possession of my mind; and as the time of my confinement approaches, I feel the presentiment stronger than ever. They have all tried to reason and laugh me out of it; but I cannot get rid of it,—and a thousand absurd associations rise to my recollection, which tend to confirm it. Do you remember the gipsy woman we met on Hampstead Heath? It is many years ago, but I have not forgotten the fortune she prophesied for me. She told me I was to die before I was nineteen. Now, my birth-day is the twelfth of this month. My hour of trial will, in all probability, be sooner, and I feel persuaded I shall not get over it."

"Emma! Shame on one of your good sense and judgment to indulge in such absurd fancies. I have no patience with you, except that I must find some excuse, on account of your bodily health, which is much impaired. But all will be well. You must keep up your spirits. Re-

collect, I did not come here to humour you in your foolish despondency."

"Right, dear Alice, and I did not ask you to come that I might render you unhappy by my idle presages of evil. Let us talk of the bright side of things. Papa is now residing with us. Would you have thought it? He could not live without *me*. So I may well be vain of myself, and fancy that he would be vexed to lose me, since he consented to quit London, and all his old friends there, to come and live near me. Indeed, I am as happy as he is, to have him. My happiest days, Alice, were spent in my father's house; and it is but fair that I should endeavour to make him happy in mine. Apropos, of London. I fancy you know as much of what has lately been going on there as I do, as it is now a year since I quitted it, and I have no correspondents there. My father tells me that the Sharpquills are going on just the same as ever, and that your quondam admirer, Mr. James, is still a bachelor at your service. The Earl of Ellerton has at present a suit pending against him, of which Mr. Maxwell has the management; which, if decided in favour of the plaintiff, will be apt to involve him to a good amount. I believe it is something concerning a debt of honour, contracted under peculiar cir-

cumstances, but I know nothing about business. Papa tells me that Lady Georgina has become quite *a character* in the fashionable circles; as she attends the races, rides, drives, and has all such accomplishments to the very highest perfection of *bon ton*, and was taking lessons at driving *four-in-hand* with the famous Earl of R——. But that is all scandal, and, at best, idle gossip; and I hope we shall have other matters to talk about. By the way, her ladyship being a sort of rival of yours, I could not avoid telling you all I knew concerning her. But I have questions to ask of you about yourself. I fancy, somehow or other, that I have a right to demand your confidence. You see the evil resulting from ever bestowing it. Hark! there is papa's knock. I must let him talk to you, and we shall speak at another time, when alone."

Here the entrance of Mr. Gardiner put an end to their conversation; and his joyful address and hearty welcome gave a new pleasure to Alice; who, as she returned the warm pressure of his hand, felt her heart glow with affection to the man whom she had proved to be her best and only friend. Mr. Gardiner was not altered; his appearance had undergone as little change as his heart, or manners. The former was still as kind, open, and generous, as the latter was unpolished, abrupt, and unaffected. The ar-

rival of Mr. Maxwell, shortly after, added another member to the circle, who, seated round a plentiful and hospitable board, strove, each and all, to render their guest as comfortable and happy as possible. Mr. Maxwell was not a stranger to Alice, with whom he had been well acquainted before his marriage with Emma; as they frequently met at Mr. Gardiner's house. Alice had always esteemed him, and felt happy in his society; but he was not one whom she would have supposed that her friend would have chosen. There was nothing to find fault with in his character, figure, or manners; but there was as little which seemed likely to attract a mind like that of Emma's. Slow in his perception, well enough fitted to plod along the path of life, and capable of defending himself against its errors and mishaps; but not calculated to attain its honours, or rise to eminence. Kind-hearted, but cool in his affections, there was nothing in his nature that could sympathize, or find sympathy with a spirit and soul like hers, who had preferred him to all others. Alice would fain have hoped that her friend was happy; yet a heavy foreboding of the contrary weighed on her heart, as she gazed on the pale and altered countenance of Emma. Her joyless and sometimes gloomy expression of face; her forced laugh, which rang with no echo from her

soul; her cold, though strictly attentive and dutiful manners towards her husband; the heartless and often abstracted terms in which she replied to his questions, kindly inquiring about her health, or proffering her some attention; her rayless and sad glance, fixed on no present object, and beaming with no sparkle of pleasure when it encountered his, all proclaimed—she is not happy. "She is unhappy," said Alice, involuntarily to herself. "She does not love him," she would have added, but she feared to trust even her own mind with such a suspicion.

After supper, Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Maxwell withdrew for an hour to attend to some business, and Alice, at the request of her friend, retired with her to the chamber of the latter.

"We shall be undisturbed here," said Emma, "as I claim this apartment for my own. I retire to it, when I wish to be solitary, and from you I have no secret thoughts. I have much to ask you, much to tell you; and I have not patience to wait until to-morrow, so I must have it all before I let you go to bed. Permit me to be selfish, for once. Of late I have found it impossible to sleep. Repose seems to have forsaken me, and I would fain amuse some part of my sleepless night at your expense. Tell me all that has happened to you; all that you have felt of pleasure and pain since we parted."

We cannot vouch that Alice obeyed that injunction *literally*, because the pains and pleasures of such a length of time, are made up of too frivolous and various circumstances to bear relating, even if there were time to tell them; but nothing of consequence or import that had occurred to her was concealed from Emma, to whom she gladly confided all that was worth detailing. Emma listened with silent attention, but her wonted interest and animation was no longer found to sympathize in what she heard. Her thoughts were evidently preoccupied by some internal feeling, and her restless glance and the burning flush on her cheek, indicated that both mind and frame were ill at ease.

"You have not told me the one thing which I wish most to know," said she, laying her hand on Alice's, during a momentary pause in the very midst of a story, which the latter was narrating. "Have you ever heard from Walter? Of him I wish most to know all concerning; but only for your sake, therefore do not hesitate to tell me."

"Emma, I did not hesitate. I know nothing of him. I have not once heard from or of him since we parted."

"Can it be possible? Or do you deceive me? Do not, I entreat you. I am dying. I know I am; and you would not wish to embitter my last moments by a belief that he was

false. He, whom of all others I would fain believe noble and virtuous. But that wish is only for your sake. Walter Deverell can be nothing to me. You do not surely suspect that he is; and at this moment I feel convinced the *world* will soon be nothing to me."

"Wherefore persist in such unfounded and painful whims? Dear Emma, you would almost tempt me to deceive you. You would make me think that your mind is too weak to be trusted with the knowledge of truth. I have spoken truly. Walter Deverell is dead to me. I know, at least I believe, he exists; but where or how I cannot tell. He has forgotten me. If you love me, do not speak of him. Reason and bitter conviction teach me that I ought to forget him."

"Reason, foolish dreamer! I know you love him, and in that case reason is of no avail. If he is false (though I fain would hope otherwise), I pity you; but I know there is no remedy against your sufferings, seek not to strive against your feelings. Continue to love him. Better worship a false deity, than to break and ruin your heart by vainly dashing its idol from the shrine. Believe me. Profit by the advice of one who has bought her experience too bitterly. Yes, Alice, I can, I will speak candidly to *you*—you know what my heart once was—

you alone shall know that it is still unchanged. The thread of existence is worn by long over-straining, but the mind is still the same. Its impressions are not, and cannot be, effaced, until they cease to be in existence. I loved Walter Deverell. I still love him. Nay, do not start! I am a pure and virtuous wife. I have striven hard to fulfil my duty as such. I think I have succeeded; perhaps better than if my actions had been prompted by the dictates of affection, instead of being guided by self-reproach and anxiously studied reason. Yes, I loved him. I freely resigned all hopes of gaining him, because all hopes were too plainly in vain. I deserve no merit for a sacrifice which was unavoidable, as I saw he loved one whom I knew well I could never rival. I felt my heart was still his; and sometimes, in spite of every argument of reason or virtue, delusive visions and vain dreams would enter my mind. Had I loved you less—oh, Alice! But I will not dwell on feelings too agonizing to bear. I resolved to take that step which would place an eternal bar between myself and the object of a passion that could never be gratified. As the wife of another, it would be a sin to love Walter Deverell; and any attempt to interfere with his affection, would be a crime, for which society would brand me with shame and abhorrence. I

knew, at least I trusted to, my own sense of virtue, to the power which my own dread of vice would inevitably have in restraining, if not for ever banishing, thoughts so baneful to my repose, and so blamable to my conscience. I married. I knew I could not love my husband; but I knew that my sense of duty and respect for the vows with which I had bound myself, would command me to observe strictly every promise of affection; and in fulfilling all that love required to one, I might forget all that love once so fondly dreamt of another. Bitterly—oh, bitterly did I deceive myself; remorse, misery, self-loathing despair, has been my doom; and I sink beneath the insufferable yoke which I have placed on ruined hopes, and a heart which is long dead to affection. Yet I blame none but myself. I have none to whom I can attribute aught of my sufferings—yet this is the bitterest cause of them all. My husband—oh, Alice! remorse and shame sting me as I pronounce his name—as I think of all his kindness—his just and uniform confidence in me—his unvarying affection; for he loves the wretch who pledged her false vows to him. False do I say? No, no, they deceived none but my own heart. I have fulfilled all that I promised; and that heart is broken to atone for its vain delusion. Bitterly, sternly, have I combatted with that

delusion; but, alas! I have striven in vain to efface from my soul an impression which must remain while it animates this fleshy prison. Oh, if you had known how hard I have struggled with those thoughts which would not be conquered, you would pity me, even though you hated me. But I am blameless, save in my thoughts. Had you witnessed the vain and secret efforts which I made to deceive myself, to cheat my aching heart into a belief that I could banish its feelings at will; how much I strove to *love* him whom I had chosen; to *love?* yes; friendship, esteem, and gratitude, were in vain called to my aid; but *love* was another's. I found I was to become a mother. This expectation brought neither hope nor emotion; but my heart is wrung when I think of my child. I cannot live. I wish to die. My life, wretched to myself, can be of little use to another; my heart, tortured with a hopeless passion, could bestow but little care on a being whose happiness for many years must depend on me. And yet to die and leave an infant, who will have no mother's bosom to nestle in; no mother's love to cherish its helpless infancy! But I cannot longer struggle against this, for my mind has no longer strength to contend, and my frame is worn out by vain efforts with my feelings. Oh, Alice, could I trust to you! I know you

love me. I know you will stand by and soothe my last agonies; but should my child survive me, will you love it for my sake? I cannot ask you to protect it. My husband has the first and only just claim to his child, and I will not seek to dispute his right. He will protect and cherish it, but men have not the tenderness of women; and although I feel confident that, while its father lives, my child will want for no worldly advantage he can give it, he cannot soothe its trivial sorrows, or impart those trivial kindnesses which infancy so much requires. He will in all probability soon wed another. Oh! should she look with harsh or jaundiced eye on my little orphan, do strive to plead for mercy with her. Tell her of all my faults. Tell her, if you will, of how little claim I had to the affections of her husband. Let her despise me if it will banish from her mind those feelings of jealousy which would naturally prejudice her against my child; and if all fails, I know you will be kind to the little orphan for my sake. Now and then you will come and see it. You will caress it, and bestow those endearments which gladden the soul of infancy. If it resembles its mother, you will, you must love it; and to your love I trust, for it has never yet deceived me."

As Emma paused, she turned aside to wipe away a solitary drop which rested for a moment

on her pale cheek. Alice burst into tears. In spite of her resolution to contend with the despondency of her friend, she was too powerfully affected by her words to be able to restrain her emotion; and leaning her head on Emma's bosom, she wept long and bitterly. Emma beheld her in silence, with fixed and mournful though affectionate glance. In that dim and sunken eye, and on that pale and hollow cheek, it was easy to see that her heart was dead to all earthly emotion.

"You weep for me, thanks, many thanks, dear kind girl. Those tears will plead for my pardon if my erring heart is to be punished for its weakness. Yes, you will pray for me. Your heart is pure; your prayers will avail me. But I feel my brain is wandering; I am exhausted; I fear I have talked too much. Go; leave me, dear Alice, for to-night; I shall be better to-morrow, and then we shall talk over all I wish to tell you. Nay, do not weep, for, after all, it may be my foolish fancy that talks of dying. I may live a long, long time, to plague you all, but I am weary to-night. I shall be better spirited to-morrow. Go; Lucy will show you to your bed-room. I hear papa and Mr. Maxwell talking in the parlour, and I dare say they wonder what has become of us. Wish them good-night for me, and tell them *I* have gone to bed."

It was in vain that Alice solicited permission to remain for the rest of the night with her friend. Emma pleaded fatigue and drowsiness; she felt inclined to sleep, and promised to retire instantly to bed, to which Alice persisted in attending her, and, after having seen her fairly prepared for rest, quitted her, though reluctantly, to seek her own apartment. She met Mr. Gardiner on the stairs.

"You have been with Emma," said he, abruptly; "what do you think of her?"

"I think she is ill, very ill; but the depression of her spirits is the chief cause, and that will be removed when her frame is strengthened. All will be well I hope."

"You *hope!* Then I presume you have your fears also? I have mine. Emma was not wont to be whimsical. I cannot help dreading her forebodings, if—but it is no use talking. We cannot prevent fate; we can only strive to do our best. I know you will exert yourself for her." Here his voice faltered, and wringing Alice's hand with a convulsive pressure, he turned aside to conceal his emotion, and hastened away.

Alice withdrew to her own apartment. She was fatigued, but her anxiety and the excitement of her feelings kept her long awake. At length she sank into a deep slumber, from which she was aroused by a sudden summons. About

two o'clock in the morning she was called to the bedside of her friend, who was seized with the pangs of labour. Every necessary aid was promptly obtained; but, alas! nature, more powerful than art, was against all efforts. After three hours of fearful suffering, Emma Maxwell gave birth to a dead child, and almost instantly expired.

The horror and anguish of this event was too sudden to be felt in full force at the moment of its occurrence. The agony of the sufferer, the confusion which was created, the dismay and over-exerted anxiety of all around, so completely overwhelmed them, that it was not until several hours after that the survivors were sufficiently calm to feel the full extent of their loss. It was not when the shriek of agony was ringing in her ear, when every nerve was strained, and every idea alert with exertions and vain efforts to alleviate these sufferings, that Alice felt the loss of her friend. It was when all was over, when the convulsive agony had ceased, when death had silenced that cry and laid that tortured frame at rest, that she saw and truly lamented the dead. When the bright clear light of day shone on that chamber of horror, when all around was again quiet and solemn, when she gazed on the still silent form extended on the couch of last repose, when she touched the clay-cold hand,

that she felt for the first time how much she had lost.

There is a solemn stillness, an awe, which pervades the house of death, under any circumstances. The most callous or reckless being seems humbled in its presence. The voice is lowered; the step is cautious in the chamber of the corpse. Although that is a sleep which cannot be broken, it would seem as though the living feared to disturb its calm. Who can gaze on that inanimate semblance of mortality without feeling a sense of awe and dread? Look! there lies one who was a moving existence like ourselves, who breathed, smiled, laughed, and wept like ourselves, and who felt all the pains and pleasures of our being. It is now a motionless, senseless thing, which no outward or visible object can affect or disturb, which no appeal can touch, no love nor hate can again excite to feeling or earthly sensation.

The anguish of heartfelt grief with which Alice gazed on the silent corse of her beloved friend was indeed bitter; but it was even keener still when the time arrived that the lifeless form was to be for ever hid from her sight. With a breaking heart she had attended to the last sad duties, the final and melancholy attentions which the living bestow on the dead during their brief sojourn in the abodes of mortals. She had been

present at all, and with her own hands assisted in performing those offices which she could not bear to see done by menial or careless assistants. This was a bitter task, but she derived a consolation from it; and while she gazed on that pale silent face, she felt that her friend was not wholly lost to her. In the silence of night, she sought the chamber which contained the remains of what was once so dear, that she might gaze on those clay-cold features, cold but unchanged in death. Emma seemed to slumber peacefully, calm though pale, as if reposing after fatigue or weariness. There was no trace of suffering on her countenance, which was placid and even smiling. In its small white coffin, by her side, lay the corse of her babe, and none could have looked on the peaceful sleep of the innocent and felt regret that it had been snatched from a world of which it had known none of the sorrows. But the time came when the living could no longer even gaze on the dead, when the remains of the most beloved must be consigned to the last earthly dwelling, which hides the form of the lost one for ever from the sight of those who live to deplore that which, though beheld no longer, is too deeply engraven on their hearts.

We will not dwell on the anguish of that time, nor attempt to describe feelings which none can appreciate but those whose memory would be

awakened too clearly, perhaps, by the description. Nor shall we attempt to portray the feelings of our heroine after all was over, after the remains of the unfortunate Emma were consigned to their last narrow dwelling-place. Her grief was of that heart-sickening desolate nature with which those who have very few to love them deplore those who love them best. Alice was not so selfish as to indulge the full excess of her own feelings; she had regard for those of others; and Mr. Gardiner required too much of her kind consideration to permit her to aggravate his sufferings by any display of her own. Mr. Gardiner claimed no sympathy, for he uttered no complaint; but Alice, who well knew the strength of his affection for his daughter, saw too plainly that his sorrow was beyond all utterance.

Mr. Gardiner beheld, without outward emotion, the violent and fearful death of his only and beloved child. With calm brow and tearless eye, he bent over her coffin ere the lid was screwed down for ever, and kissed her clay-cold brow with lips scarcely less cold. He uttered no exclamation of sorrow, and to the heedless observer it would have seemed that he felt none. With a firm step and erect form he followed her to the grave. He stood by in silence, while

others wept. Strangers, who knew her not, shed tears as they saw the coffins of the youthful mother and her babe lowered to their narrow dwelling; but he showed no signs of emotion. He could not: the clay which fell on these coffins crushed his heart with its weight, and the grave closed over all earthly hopes.

At first his silence and apparent resignation alarmed Alice, who dreaded that his suppressed emotion might have some fatal effect; but she was relieved from all her fears, for day after day passed on without any change in his health, and little alteration in his spirits. Shortly after the funeral of Emma, Mr. Maxwell had to go to London on some urgent business, and at the request of Mr. Gardiner, Alice readily consented to remain at Bath and to keep house until his return. Besides being little inclined to return so quickly to the house of feasting, which accorded so ill with her feelings, Alice had some anxiety for her kind friend, and wished if possible to cheer and console him for his loss.

Her long intimacy with Mr. Gardiner and the gratitude which bound her to him made her regard him as a father, and as one whom she considered it a duty to sympathize with and to love. Mr. Gardiner seemed truly sensible of her kindness and of the efforts which she made

to console him; for although he neither claimed nor desired sympathy, his heart was keenly alive to the affection by which it was prompted.

After the departure of Mr. Maxwell, Alice and Mr. Gardiner remained almost secluded from all society, except that of each other; and therefore the former had nothing to divert her thoughts from the anxious solicitude which she felt for her friend. It was evident that his mind, feelings, and frame had sustained a shock from which it would be long before he could recover. Alice saw the change in every word, motion, or action. She saw, yet she feared to offer any consolation, which she knew would be useless. In outward habits or demeanour, Mr. Gardiner evinced none of that grief which preyed so heavily on his secret thoughts. He attended business, paid due attention to all worldly and domestic affairs, with even more punctual exactness than before; yet still there was a change, and the watchful eye of affection could discover it in everything. The sudden silence—the abstracted and sometimes wandering glance—the frequent and involuntary sigh, as he sat in gloomy meditation during those evening hours when he was wont to be most social—the start, when addressed—the inattention or forced interest in all that was passing around him—all bespoke a mind absorbed in some secret

thought, of which it was too easy to guess the nature.

One evening, about a week after the departure of Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Gardiner entered the parlour, where Alice was already seated, with a countenance of such unwonted cheerfulness and animation that excited surprise and pleasure in Alice, who was delighted at the change.

"I have been busy, looking over and arranging a parcel of old papers," said he, smiling; "and I am much pleased to find there is less to do than I had anticipated. Matters are more on my side than I expected. I shall leave all clear."

"How? I do not understand you."

"No, I suppose you do not; and I could not explain all the minutiæ of my reflections. You will be inclined to laugh when I tell you, that for this week past I have been arranging all my business, paying all old scores, and making calculation as to how all matters would stand, if I were to leave the world in a hurry. Such a thing, you know, is not impossible; and I am too good a lawyer, I hope, to leave my business to be mismanaged by bunglers."

Mr. Gardiner laughed as he spoke; it was long since his laugh had rung on Alice's ear, and it sounded strange and hollow.

"These are odd reflections," said she, endea-

vouring to smile, "and so unlike your wonted vein of humour that I must take it as a joke."

"You will be mistaken, then; for I assure you I am speaking seriously. You know me too well, I hope, to think that I would say what was not the truth. I tell you, that for this week past I have been making every arrangement and settling everything, with as much precision and care as though I were on my death-bed, surrounded by greedy heirs and busy lawyers, who were eager about my last will and testament. So, if I die, I will have left nothing to trouble people with, which is a good thing, considering that I shall leave nothing to recompense them. When I die, few, if any, will lament me; but as few will have cause to rejoice at my death. So much for the advantages of few friends and no money."

"But what makes such a thought occur to you? There is little appearance of your quitting the world, and wherefore calculate about it?"

"True! But when a man is sick of life, he may be permitted to speak without prejudice on the chances of getting quit of it. A few months ago I should have hated to think of dying; and I would have submitted to be cheated by any scoundrel in the world, rather than have made any arrangements about the probability of my death. But the case is altered now, I am weary

of the world, and it pleases me to speculate on the probable accidents by which I may escape from it."

"But it is a cruel pleasure," said Alice, with some emotion, "and unlike your usual kindness to take delight in what gives pain to your friends."

"Ay, child, you reason justly; but my maxim has always been to speak the truth. If I retain a spark of affection for any being in the world, it is for yourself; but I will not flatter you by saying that I could love life for your sake. That is not the truth. I repeat, I am heartily tired of this existence. But do not be alarmed; I do not intend tiring every one else by my complaints; however long or short the time may be that we are destined to live together, depend on it I shall not render you unhappy by discontent. Although it is too often the habit of mankind to take advantage of the affections of their friends for the purpose of tormenting them (because those who do not care for them will not listen to their complaints), it is not with that motive I address myself to you, but because I like to tell all that passes in my mind to those who, I think, will care to hear it. I feel convinced that you are not indifferent to my feelings. I know that you equally lament my misfortune. Emma was dear to you, and you have suffered much from

her loss; but your grief is not like mine: you lament the loss of the playfellow of your childhood, of a pleasing friend, and an affectionate companion; but I have lost all that was dear to my existence. Emma was my child. She derived her life from me. Her blood flows in my veins. To her I looked for comfort and kindness in my old age. There was no other being in the world from whom I could claim the affection of kindred. She is dead, and with her have broken all the ties which bound me to the world. It is now the evening of life with me; the darkness of age steals on me apace; and it is too late now to form new affections, even though this heart were capable of sympathizing with them. Independent of the ties of nature, which in spite of the reasoning of philosophers I still believe have a strong influence on our hearts, it requires the habitual association of years to form any lasting attachment, save the day-dream of what is called love, which with all men passes away with the first sunshine of youth. I, too, have had my day-dream, and its idol was reft from me before the delusion which hallowed her was dissipated by the reality of life. The mother of Emma was my first love. She died before I had time to weary of her, or to discover those faults and blemishes which long association or the petulance of tem-

per is apt to discern after the first charms of affection become worthless by possession. Bitterly and long I deplored the loss of her who, had she lived a few years longer, might have been less valued or lamented. I do not, therefore, wish to extol her beyond others, or to claim merit to myself for a constancy which was never tried; but, be that as it may, my love, unchanged at her death, seemed to be buried in her grave. I never loved another: perhaps my heart was not formed for many affections, or perhaps my organ of 'philoprogenitiveness' was more powerful than any other. I loved my child: the orphan daughter of my Emma had too strong a claim on my kindness to admit of any other. During my first hours of grief, her innocent smiles consoled me; and after that was assuaged, I loved her too well to seek another comforter. As she grew up her affection amply repaid me. But wherefore am I talking thus? *You* know how much I loved her, and yet I feel inclined to talk of all to you—of all her virtues, of all her affection. It is foolish to do so, it is selfish, for I see it gives you pain; but permit me to act selfishly; for indeed it is a consolation more sweet than you are aware of to talk of my lost child to the only one who knew all her virtues."

Alice would have replied. She wished to offer consolation, but her own feelings were too power-

ful to be restrained. She wept with convulsive emotion.

"I have striven hard to reason with myself on this subject," continued Mr. Gardiner. "I well know it is in vain to regret, I have said to myself. The world is still the same to me. I should not have felt thus wretched though she had left me for some distant land, never to return; in which case, as equally certain of never meeting her again, why should I not have felt equally bereaved? But I reason in vain—she is dead! in these words are the doom of all my hopes. Dead! that word sounds to my soul with a withering knell, and it is in vain I strive to overcome the despair which it strikes to my soul. Time, you will say, must soften my regrets; but I know it cannot. Everything around me continually reminds me of what I have lost, and lost for ever—I can seek another scene. No—I am too old to change my habits, my home, or country. The very change would be more painful than the regrets which it sought to remove. I cling to all that reminds me of her, who was my all in this world. But these are vain and useless reflections. Let us change the subject. I was talking of my worldly affairs, and these are still of importance to be attended to. You must know, that since I began to wish for death, I have taken great pleasure in pre-

paring all things, as if such an event were really at hand. I have made even my last will; and, although there is little to give away, it is duly signed and sealed, and will be found in my desk, up stairs in my apartment. Although its contents are of little importance to any one, I wish much that all it requests should be fulfilled, which will cost little trouble, there being only the sum of three hundred pounds to dispose of, which is not worth the lawyers making any dispute about. You look alarmed. There is no occasion for being so. I do not look like a dying man; and I hope you do not suspect my intellects. Only, as such things happen every day, I should not like to be taken by surprise. I have been too long time a lawyer to like trusting to any man but myself, therefore I have settled everything in my own way, in case of any disputes. Now as that's all understood, let us talk of other things. I am weary of despondency, and ashamed of making you dull and unhappy. Dry those tears, child, and we will think of happier days. I have had my share of them, and you have many to come.

Alice was, at first, astonished at the foregoing conversation, but as Mr. Gardiner appeared anxious to change the subject, she forbore any further remark, and, insensibly, their discourse turned on by-gone days, the associations of which

were sweet though sad, when recalling the memory of friends so long connected by various events of pain and pleasure.

Mr. Gardiner alluded to many forgotten events. Many happy days, shut up in the book of memory, but still indelibly imprinted on its pages, when unfolded by retrospection. He recalled many circumstances long passed away, much to the surprise of Alice, who thought these trivial occurrences had made no impression on his mind, though in hers they still held places. They were eras in the childhood of Emma and herself. Those cases of memory, to which every one looks back, even through the long desert of vanished years.

It was late before they parted for the night, and, by the time they retired, Mr. Gardiner had recovered his wonted spirits, and seemed more cheerful, and even happier, than he had been since the death of Emma. Alice rejoiced at this happy change, and returned with affection his kind pressure of the hand, as he bade her goodnight.

To-morrow morning came. Alice rose at the usual hour. The untasted breakfast stood before her, while she waited long for her friend. Surely Mr. Gardiner had risen earlier than usual and was gone out? for it was not his custom to oversleep himself. After waiting a considerable

time, she made inquiries, and found he had not yet quitted his chamber. By degrees impatience changed into conjecture, anxiety into alarm. A sudden thought flashed on her mind; but it was too fearful to express, or even harbour for a moment in uncertainty. She started from her chair, and hastened without calling any attendant to the chamber of Mr. Gardiner. She knocked loudly, and, receiving no answer, entered. The apartment was vacant. The bed-curtains were drawn close round, and the blood fell heavily from her heart as she lifted the curtain. It was vacant. She next proceeded to the adjoining room, a small closet, or study, where Mr. Gardiner usually sat, and to her surprise and joy, she beheld him seated at his desk. His back was towards the door as she entered; but with an exclamation of joy she sprang forward and caught him by the arm. It was stiff and cold—one glance at those fixed and ghastly features. He was dead! Alice fell senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER VII.

Our readers, who have any interest in the fate of our hero, will by this time be impatient to learn what were his proceedings after the abrupt and unceremonious departure from his grandfather's house. It will be remembered that the postilion was ordered to drive to London; which command was obeyed, and thither our travellers proceeded, arriving safe (with the exception of all necessary stoppages) in due time at their journey's end.

It would be interminable, as well as useless, to follow Walter through every minor detail of his proceedings. It is sufficient to tell the result, which was passing his examination at Surgeons' Hall, with all other necessary examinations; which ended much beyond even his best expectations in all honour and applause, he being pronounced, by that all-critical and just tribunal, perfectly fit to practise in the profession—that is, if any one would employ him. Though, unfortunately, the judicious examiners have it not in their power to procure patients for such of the young aspirants whom they judge

deserving of them, yet Walter had no fears of success, at least none intruded on his moment of triumph.

"That is a youth of uncommon talent," remarked Dr. ——, as he quitted the hall. "I feel convinced he will be eminent in the profession."

Walter did not hear that encouraging remark, and therefore we cannot judge what effect it might have had on his future career. Some minds are spoiled by praise; while others, formed by nature for high endeavour, sink depressed by neglect, and disheartened for want of sympathy.

At the time of quitting Devonshire, Walter's whole fortune, real and personal, consisted of a bank check for one hundred pounds; and having left all his trunks &c. behind him at the Hall, his necessities obliged him to reconcile his pride to make use of the money, which, if it had been in his power, he would have felt much better pleased to return to where he received it.

We must now introduce him, in his present situation, where we find him resident in a first floor, handsomely furnished, in Manchester-street, Manchester-square—for which he agreed to pay the weekly sum of three guineas, on condition of various advantages; among others, that of permission to place a brass-plate on the street-door, with a lamp and night bell, with the

name of Mr. Crawford, Surgeon, engraved in large letters, to attract passers by and entice patients.

It must not be deemed that a love of extravagance or show caused our hero to choose such expensive lodgings. Indeed, he felt many fears as to the ability to continue in them; but it was a desperate and necessary step. If he wished to succeed, having no patronage, he must set up as if he had means of support; otherwise, none who could pay him would be willing to employ him. The world never gives aid to a man who appears really to require it. Thus far he judged rightly; but pride, and a strong sense of false shame, was Walter's chief fault, and in this instance proved his error. He determined to avoid all his former acquaintances, and by assuming a false name, he avoided all possibility of recognition; therefore no one cared to take any interest in his success. True, there was none in whom he felt any interest, and perhaps none who could have assisted him; but all possibility of their doing so was effectually prevented.

On his first arrival in London, he felt inclined to seek out all his former friends, even to the most trivial acquaintance; but bitter and unlooked-for disappointment rendered him indifferent, and even callous to all regard of society.

As may be supposed, his first inquiries were after Mrs. Russel and Alice. In spite of his wounded feelings and proud resolves concerning the latter, his affections overcame all anger, and he eagerly hastened to the house which had been his dearest and only home. It is already known what intelligence he would meet with; but it fell like a thunderbolt on him, when, after many fruitless inquiries, he learnt the circumstances. His information, after all, was unsatisfactory and partial. On finding the house in Caroline-street empty, and learning, from those who were employed to take care of it, the length of time which had elapsed since the departure of its former tenants, Walter proceeded straight to Mr. Gardiner's, where he trusted not only to learn the whole story, but to meet with a kind and friendly reception. The change there was, if possible, greater. The house was empty, the office converted into a stationer's shop, and none of the new inhabitants could give the slightest account of the former occupants. A tradesman in the neighbourhood supplied all due information, and from him Walter learned that Mr. Gardiner had gone, about six months ago, to reside with his daughter, who was married; but whether to Bath or Bristol, the man could not tell; but all letters were to be intrusted, and all particulars learnt, at No. 29,

opposite. Walter asked no more particulars; for what he most cared to know was of such a nature, that he felt no inclination to transmit it by letters to any one. Sick at heart and depressed in spirits, he returned to his lonely dwelling, resolving henceforth to renounce all search for those who evidently had forgotten him.

"Wherefore," thought he, "do I wish to cross the path of one who cares not for me? and who, if she did, could only suffer ruin for my sake?" Yet, in spite of these resolves, his mind was tortured by a thousand newly-excited suspicions. Perhaps Alice had not received his letters—perhaps she deemed him equally neglectful and unkind; but she was gone he knew not whither.

Walter next thought of visiting the Sharpquills, who were the only persons likely to be able to give him any correct information. But besides his strong personal aversion to every individual of that family, their connexion with Lord Ellerton made it almost necessary to avoid them, as Walter felt a natural wish to avoid coming in contact with either that nobleman or his daughter.

There was only one other house which Walter cared to visit, and thither he would have gone on his first arrival, had not a paragraph in the *Times* newspaper caught his eye on the very

day he first came to London. The paragraph was as follows:—

"Died suddenly, of three days' illness, Rose, the youngest and beloved daughter of Humphrey Simkin, Esq., Jewin Crescent, Aldgate."

"Of a broken heart," thought Walter; and as he hastily dashed away a rising tear, he checked the regret which would have deplored the fate of one, whose hopes on earth were blighted for ever.

The circumstances connected with the unfortunate Charles Travers were so painfully linked with his lovely and ill-fated cousin, that Walter felt as convinced that her death was occasioned by the fearful catastrophe, as though he had seen the blow struck which broke her heart, and snapped the thread of her young existence. After all that had passed, he felt a reluctance too painful to intrude his claims of friendship on the grief of an afflicted father, whose sorrow his presence might increase, but could not console.

In changing his name, Walter had two purposes; namely, preventing all chance of recognition and consequent intrusion from persons whom he wished to avoid, and securing himself against being discovered by his grandfather, who, either in clemency or hate, might be curious to trace his retreat; and to whom Walter determined henceforth to be as dead for ever.

Although failing to meet with the success which he at first anticipated, Walter continued to live on in hope, while his stock of money remained; but as, by degrees, he found that was fast diminishing, and no appearance of any addition, he began to feel anxious and depressed.

It was in vain that the brass plate and night bell shone conspicuous on the door-way; in vain that the stained glass lamp was duly lighted with gas to attract the passers-by. No one paused to read the name, or, far less, to claim the professional aid which it offered. Days, weeks, and months, passed away. Three guineas a week was easily paid, but could not be paid after the sum was exhausted from which it was taken; and, at the end of three months, Walter found a very small stock remaining of his hundred pounds, now reduced by two-thirds at least. Some change must be made in his domestic economy; and the only one that was in his power at the present time, was to reduce his expenditure. He accordingly removed into cheaper lodgings in an humbler situation; but still no appearance of success, though his necessary expenditure was still daily going on. A second floor, less sumptuously furnished, in Fitzroy-street, Fitzroy-square, next became his residence. The brass plate, night bell, and

lamp, still continued to be apparent, but equally successless; for although the three Misses D—— opposite, very pretty and coquettish young ladies, stared with sufficient confidence and admiration at the "handsome doctor," as they termed him, their prudent and vain lady-mother continued to receive the daily visits of her own old medical man;—a staid priggish gentleman, in a pigtail, and double-bodied carriage, which latter quality had more attraction than all our hero's personal advantages.

On two occasions, however, Walter had the honour of being applied to for professional assistance. One case was that of an old beggar-woman, who was knocked down by a cart before his door; and the other an old gouty gentleman, who refused to pay his bill, after an attendance of six weeks, because he ventured to prescribe temperance as a cure. Walter had neither money nor inclination to prosecute; and, wearied out by hope deferred, he began to think that fortune, like friends, had wholly forgotten him. Under the present circumstances, it can hardly be wondered at, though hope at times deserted him. He was alone in the world. He had nothing to depend on but his own exertions; and these seemed to be blighted on every attempt. It is true that his occupation required no *exertion*, in the literal sense of the word. It consisted

of nothing that occupied the mind, or tired the frame; but such is the organization of society, that every man must choose some pursuit; and if that fails, it is no easy task to enter into another. Besides, what can be more tiresome than the anxious inaction, the daily deferred change with which we hang on from day to day in hope of some better fortune, before we can make up our minds to relinquish all on which so many bright dreams and fond hopes have been placed?

Walter's disappointed prospects and fears for the future were rendered more heavy, as he had none to share them with him. Lewis, ever faithful and affectionate, still clung to him; but, though Walter loved the gentle boy, he could place no faith in his wisdom, nor claim any counsel from his advice. He regarded Lewis as a being, who was dependent on him for support and protection. He could not, for a moment, have harboured a thought of refusing him both; but the means of doing so, the plans of future prospects, all rested with his own mind, and harassed his thoughts during the vacant hours of his long unemployed day, and, too frequently, the whole sleepless night.

In this uncertain state of existence, nearly four months passed away; at the end of which, finding his money almost wholly exhausted, Walter saw that some step must be taken, but what?

He had more than once thought of offering his services to some vessel going abroad; but that innate and inexplicable tie, which links almost every man to his native land, had made him hesitate to quit England, until all hopes of success at home had deserted him. There was now no other alternative, and Walter determined to apply for such a situation; and, with this view, he set about making applications in all quarters. His expectations were humble enough. A free passage and his living on board of the ship, was all he required for his services;—but, alas! the humblest demand is often as hard to get supplied as the greatest; and Walter found, after many fruitless exertions, that this, which he had long regarded as a last and desperate resource, was as far beyond his reach as were his former buoyant expectations.

Many were the long and weary journeys which he took to all quarters of the town, recommended to go from one individual to another, probably with no view but getting rid of the *onus* which every man feels at giving a direct refusal; and, after having spent the whole day without attaining an inch nearer his purpose, he returned exhausted and dejected to his lodgings, where, sick at heart, he often went supperless to bed. Worse still; the time came when the fear of want warned him to refuse the food which ap-

petite would otherwise have taken; and when rejecting his evening meal, upon the plea of indisposition, he internally calculated on what would be left for the morrow. He wished to give up his lodging. It was more than he could afford to pay; but still he remained, day after day, in hopes of the chance which he now eagerly sought for. He had obtained a half promise of a situation, in a vessel which was to sail in the course of a fortnight; and he trusted to that, although by no means certain. At length the day arrived, that he was reduced to his last guinea. On that same day, unexpected good fortune! he obtained the situation. The bargain was signed and sealed. In the course of a week he was to embark, as surgeon's mate, on board of the King George, which was to sail in ten days for the East Indies.

This long wished-for good fortune seemed, at first, as manna from heaven; and Walter felt too overjoyed to express his thanks as he quitted the vessel, although Captain H——, the commander, shook him kindly by the hand, and wished him joy of his success.

"It was more than I expected, I can tell you," said the honest-hearted sailor, "for though I had a liking to you from the first, it isn't altogether in my power,—and your opponent for the situation had high recommendations; but the

surgeon has taken a fancy for you. You may consider yourself devilish lucky—once he takes you by the hand, your fortune's made. I wish you joy."

Walter returned the pressure of the good-hearted sailor's friendly hand, but he scarcely heard the words which were addressed to him; and it was not until after he had quitted the vessel, and proceeded a good way homeward, that the tumult of his emotions gave him time to reflect calmly on this change, and to consider whether he ought to esteem it so fortunate. Strange though it may seem, Walter felt none of that joy and satisfaction which he had anticipated, during his long anxious efforts to obtain this situation. It is true he saw it was the only and sure means of rescuing himself from impending want or dependence, and as such he had eagerly striven to obtain it; but now when the excitement of exertion was over, when all was decided, he began to regard the whole with very different feelings.

In pecuniary matters, he had certainly reason to rejoice; but at what sacrifice did he purchase the temporary advantage, which was all that was to be gained by the step he had taken? Exiled for years, perhaps for ever from his native land, from all those habits of country which are so dear to every human breast, from all that he

had ever loved, an eternal barrier must now be placed; and even those ties which he had looked upon as already broken, seemed rent anew as he thought of relinquishing them for ever. Separation is like death, however we may accustom ourselves to expect it; when the time in reality arrives, we feel its approach with awe and regret.

It was in vain that Walter strove to banish these feelings. The more he strove to reason with himself, the stronger they became; and, as he threaded his way through the busy thronged streets, he became absorbed in a reverie of past recollections.

As Walter was thus pursuing his way in no pleasant mood, he felt a hand touch his arm, just as he was turning into Piccadilly; and, looking round, beheld a tawdry-dressed, vulgar-looking female, with a huge pink bonnet and feathers, and a long white veil, which concealed her features.

"I thought it was you," said she, in a well-known voice, "and I was determined not to let you escape, though you seemed so anxious to avoid me. I called twice to you, and you wouldn't look round; but I've caught you."

"On my word, your ladyship does me great injustice," replied Walter, bowing. "Had I

either seen or heard you, I should have been most happy ——"

"Ay, so I dare say you would have me believe," replied Lady Georgina (for it was she), "but I am not such a fool as fancy you will be as willing to recognise me now as you were when I was the fine lady, though I don't fancy myself a bit less worth your notice. But it's the way of the world. I'd at first half a mind to let you pass without saying anything; and I almost wish I had, for I've splashed my stockings running across the street after you; and now, bless me, I declare I should hardly think it was you. *How* you are altered! When did you come from Paris? Have you seen the earl lately? I fancy he has told you a fine story about my ingratitude."

"I have not seen the Earl of Ellerton since I last saw your ladyship. If you recollect that time, I think it is three years ago."

"La! indeed, haven't you? I thought to have seen you last February, when I went with papa into Devonshire; but you weren't there, and we did not stay more than a few hours. The old gentleman seemed to be in a terrible bad humour; but he and papa closeted themselves up together, and I wasn't admitted to the conference, though I had a strong notion it was

something about myself. I know it was about *you*, for I heard your name mentioned; but I could only catch a few words, here and there, though I listened at the key-hole, as I was in the adjoining room. Papa and I returned to London the next morning, and I never have found out what took him to West Hall, though I can give a guess; a nod is as good as a wink, you know, and I'm sharp enough where I've any interest; but I did not care to trouble myself, as I had my own matters to attend to. I fancy you've heard of my marriage."

"No, indeed. I never heard of such an event."

"La! how odd! Well, I declare, now, I feel quite *put out*, since I see I must tell you all about it myself. Why, I've been married these four months. It was a love match, since I must tell you all about it. Papa knew nothing of the courtship until all was decided; and I thought he'd have gone mad with rage—but he couldn't help himself, for I took care he shouldn't find it out till I was fairly married. You can't think what a passion he was in. He ordered me to quit the house instantly, and I didn't hesitate to obey; for I had a home of my own to go to, and a husband who was quite able and willing to protect me. So I left the house that very night. Just step in at this

door-way, the people knock up against one so. Well, as I was saying, I left the house that very night. Mr. Jones took lodgings for me down there in that street, and we have lived there very independent and happy ever since. But only think of the dishonest conduct of the earl, he withholds my portion, and won't let me have a farthing of all the money that was legally settled on me by mamma, on the plea that I married without his consent. His consent, truly !—I'd have waited a precious time before I'd have got his consent to marry any one; for he was always laying plans to make a match for me, as he called it, with some rich man, whose money he might get in his hands. But none of those he tried would have me, and I might have waited for ever at that rate; so I determined to please myself, and I don't repent having done so; but I think it is very hard to be cheated out of my own lawful property, because I have married the man I liked. But Mr. Jones says he's determined to try the case, and he has already put it into a lawyer's hands; and, bless you! who do you think papa has employed but young Sharpquill, who called on me the other morning, with such an insolent letter. He isn't a lawyer, mind you; he's only an attorney's clerk, but papa employs him as his messenger, *amanuensis*, &c.

and quite patronises him. But there is a secret reason for that; James is going to marry a lady of high fortune, that papa has introduced to him, and one good turn deserves another. Can you guess? But I'll talk of that some other time. I only must say that whatever my conduct is, I had no good examples set me. But I trust I know how to conduct myself; and my husband is much more capable of protecting and advising me than ever the earl cared to trouble himself with doing. Mr. Jones is a man of noble principles, and sterling honour, as he has amply proved by the contempt with which he has defied the earl, and by his resolution to use every means to obtain my property, which is so unlawfully retained. And then his kindness, his disinterested affection for myself,—but you will laugh at me, and I shan't talk nonsense to you. I wish you would come and see me. Mind, I don't say *me* alone, my husband would be happy, I'm sure. He's in a situation at present, a very excellent one. The Marquis of D——'s steward and butler he is, and great confidence is placed in him. He has been there ever since he left papa's, which was six months before our marriage. We corresponded all that time, however, for our courtship began almost the very day he came to our house. I dare say you think it strange, but I'm sure if you saw

Lim, you wouldn't be surprised at my choice. Such an elegant figure, a perfect model; so graceful, and so gentlemanlike, I'm sure many a lord would give half his estate to be like him. But that's nothing to you, and a man's no judge of men's good looks, but you know I always said I was determined to have a handsome husband. By-the-bye, that puts me in mind of Susan, (the wretch!) she used to say so,—she behaved most shamefully to me,—never was such base ingratitude. She carried on the correspondence between me and Jones, and gave all sorts of encouragement to it, until we were married, and then she told the earl before I had time to break the subject to him, and did all in her power to exasperate him against us. She is a vile, wicked wretch, and as she still keeps her place, I've no doubt she does all in her power to keep papa against us. But no matter, he's worse than she is; and I trust that we shall be able to get the better of such wickedness. Jones is determined to carry on the case, and his lawyer has agreed to undertake it, though I am much afraid it will be a difficult job. The earl has got his hands over the cash, and he won't part with it unless he's forced; for I know he is much in want of it. He has all but ruined himself with his own extravagance, and he eagerly keeps my property

as a last resource. He tried in vain to make it a bait to entice other large fortunes. West Hall was a long-cherished speculation, and the cash of your old grandfather was long his most darling hope. But never talk of that now, *we* had nothing to do with it. I am sure you can't say I ever showed any wish to take you in; but no matter, we shan't talk of the past—I am glad to see you again, for auld-lang-syne; and if you'll come and see me, I'll introduce you to my husband, and you shall judge if I am to be blamed for my choice. Come any Sunday evening, he's always at home on Sundays, for an hour or two, to tea—that's to say, if you aren't too proud,—but you never had much of vanity. Do you remember how I laughed at you, for the trouble you took about the girl that got hurt with my carriage? But I mustn't stand here, nor keep you standing. Bless me, it's almost dark, and I didn't lay the fire in the grate before I came out. You see I have to do everything myself, very unlike how it was with me when you knew me first. I have just been out buying a lobster for my supper. I have it here, under my shawl, I dare say you are surprised at such a change in *me*, but I can assure you I am a thousand times happier and more comfortable than I was when I had nothing to do but to drive here and there in a carriage, and yawn for perfect

weariness. I am as happy now as the day is long,—but I must be off. Good bye. I'll be glad to see you. Ours is No. 3, Swallow-street, you'll see the name—Mr. Jones, on a bell at the left-hand side of the door; be sure and ring that, as there are a great many other lodgers in the house—good bye, good bye."

And shaking his hand with a hearty pressure, her ladyship ran off, and making her way across the street, through a crowd of carriages, with more expedition than grace, was quickly out of sight.

This was an unexpected meeting; but our hero was more amused than surprised by the account which this ci-devant scion of aristocracy gave of herself. The marriage of Lady Georgina, however ill-suited to her rank in society, was by no means inferior to her character, or the habits in which she had been trained. If our readers have any recollection of the companions in whose society Lady Georgina Ellerton spent her private hours, they will not be surprised at the result.

Walter was not surprised. Indeed the conversation of her ladyship recalled many associations to his mind, that seemed to prove the impossibility of any better finale to such a career. Her allusions to the earl's schemes upon himself, only served to corroborate his former suspicions, and the truth of his grandfather's

assertion of the treaty which had secretly passed between the wealthy aspirant for a title, and the titled aspirant for wealth.

Many were the reflections which arose in Walter's mind at this moment; and, as the scenes of by-gone days thronged on his memory, he became absorbed in a reverie, regardless of the passing crowd, through which, unknowing and unknown, he elbowed, jostled, and pushed his way along.

So much was his mind occupied by internal cogitations, that he scarcely noticed whither he went, but had pursued his way almost mechanically, which was easy, as he had passed the very same route every day, going to and coming from the East-India Docks, for six weeks and more.

"Battersea-bridge, sir? Battersea-bridge?" cried a busy and noisy omnibus cad, pushing himself before our hero, who, roused from his reverie by this address, looked round and found himself at the White-horse-cellar, Piccadilly.

Fairly awakened from his dream, Walter now slackened his pace, conscious for the first time of what was passing around him; and, as he turned back to retrace the well-known and often-traversed street, he contrasted his present feelings with those which had occupied his mind seven years before, when for the first time he had passed that way. The words "Battersea-bridge,"

too, awakened a train of associations in his mind, and the recollection of his extraordinary adventure there recurred with full force to his memory. How many changes had taken place since that time, then little dreamt of! How much of happiness had he since tasted!—how many blissful hours and joyous days had passed away, never, never to return! He could have exclaimed with the poet—

"Would they had never been, or were to come!"

But wishes were vain. They *had* been, and their memory refused to depart, though they could be no more: for all that constituted their existence had ceased to be. The various and complicated circumstances which concentrated his happiness, were scattered and dispersed; and unless it had been in his power to call time, place, and individuals together, in exactly the same positions, he could never again enjoy what had given him pleasure in former days.

As Walter drew nearer home, he felt an unwonted reluctance to enter it. Much as he had wished to assure Lewis of his ability to secure independence for the future, he had never fully acquainted him with his intentions as to the means of doing so. To take Lewis abroad with him seemed almost impracticable; and the

thought of separation was so painful to himself, that he dreaded proposing it to the poor youth, who, he well knew, would feel it more bitterly. But it was necessary now to inform him of the truth, and the further arrangements would be made after the whole was fully discussed and explained. Hitherto, as he was uncertain about the result of his plan, Walter had deferred introducing the painful subject. The longer a disagreeable task is deferred, the more reluctant one feels to begin it; and slackening his pace, he fain would have prolonged his walk, tired though he was, rather than have returned home.

As he passed the end of Bond-street, a thought struck him, that he would inquire for his former protégé, Betsy Brown, who, it will be remembered, was placed at his expense under the tuition of a milliner and dressmaker in that place.

On his first arrival in London, he had paid a visit to the former residence of the grandmother, whom he learnt was dead. After this information, there being no further occasion for his pecuniary assistance, we hope our readers will not esteem him less for not seeking out Betsy, who was provided for, and to whom his interference could be of no service. We do not wish to claim credit to him for morality stricter or better than others, but prudence as well as

reason told him that his society could be of no advantage to a young and beautiful female, whose path in life, if honourable, must be distinct from his. But now, when about to quit England for ever, he felt his heart warm towards all his former associations; and he justly considered that there could be no harm in seeing for once, and probably for the last time, his former pupil, whose gratitude, independent of her naturally affectionate disposition, would not fail to receive him with kindness.

Full of this hope, he proceeded to the house of Madame De Vancé, perfectly recollecting the name and address; for, notwithstanding his resolution not to visit her, he had more than once found occasion to pass that way, and never failed to cast an anxious though hastily averted glance at the windows, half hoping to recognise the well-remembered face of Betsy. And, as he now knocked at the door, he could not help picturing to himself that face, blooming in all its ripened beauty, radiant with smiles, and beaming joyous welcome to her once-beloved friend and benefactor. The door was opened by a smart, showily-dressed, young woman, but at the first glance, Walter saw that it was not Betsy. On his inquiring for Madame De Vancé, he was shown into a spacious apartment on the left of the entrance, where several girls were

seated at work. Madame was upstairs attending a lady; she would be down in a few minutes, if the gentleman would take a seat and wait.

Walter did not sit down; he walked towards the window. It was approaching to twilight; but standing nearer, as if looking out on the street, he hastily scanned the workers, (who, of course, took no seeming notice of him,) but his eager glance failed to discern, in the face or form of any present, her whom he sought. There was one, a very pretty girl, who looked up with a half-smiling, sly, coquettish glance, as she observed his eye fixed on her, but she was very dark-haired, with bright black eyes; and all the others were, or seemed to be, in Walter's disappointed opinion, "infernally ugly."

In a few minutes Madame De Vancé made her appearance, and signified her identity by the due importance of her salute as she approached our hero, who, advancing to commence his inquiry, felt somewhat puzzled how to begin, more particularly as he observed the eyes of all present fixed upon him. A momentary awkwardness, very unusual in him, made him hesitate as to the best manner of commencing his inquiry; but, hastily recovering his presence of mind, he requested a few moments' private conversation with madame herself. This request was instantly granted. He was conducted by her into

a small antechamber, where, in a few words, he related the purpose of his visit. Madame listened with gracious politeness. "She perfectly remembered receiving an apprentice named Elizabeth Brown, a very beautiful girl, she remarked, with blue eyes and golden hair. It was some years ago. She was paid a handsome premium with her, and intended to have taught her the business perfectly. She had high hopes of her success, and a very good opinion of her conduct, until more than two years ago, when she eloped with a worthless villain, who had long corresponded secretly with her, and since which time madame had heard nothing concerning her. She was very grieved, exceedingly shocked, but could in no way blame herself, having done all in her power to inculcate good principles in the girl, and treated her with the utmost affection. However, after what had occurred, she could not be expected to take any further trouble concerning her." Walter was grieved also, and certainly had no wish to give her further trouble; and, apologizing for what he had already given, he thanked her for the information, and departed.

It was almost dark when he again entered the street. The lamps were lighted, and the working part of the populace were busy hurrying homewards. Walter pursued his way in a far

from happy mood. He felt irritated with himself, vexed at what he had just heard, and exasperated against all the world. Turning the corner in Oxford street, he paused to cross, as the way was impeded by a heavily-laden waggon which was passing, when his name was pronounced by a familiar voice, and looking round, he beheld the well-known face of James Sharpquill, radiant with unwonted animation and surprise, but still unchanged in its ugliness.

"Mercy on us, Walter Deverell! Can it be possible? I felt sure it was you, though I could hardly believe my own eyes! Lord, when did you come to town? I never heard of your being here! Well, I'm right glad to see you. I was just thinking about you. We'll have a rare gossip. What a lucky meeting!" And as he spoke he passed his arm familiarly into that of our hero, who, under different circumstances, might have received his advances with a very ill grace; but, in misfortune, when we feel ourselves alone in the world, the voice of kindness, however harsh the accents,—the proffered hand of friendship, whoever extends it, never fails to find welcome in the lonely and desolate heart; and as Walter returned the pressure of James Sharpquill's hand, he felt a sensation of regard which he had never before harboured towards him. Heedless whither he went, he mechani-

cally suffered himself to be led along; while his companion, eager to enter into his proposed gossip, proceeded:—

"Lord! how odd this meeting is! I was just wishing to see you. Mercy on us, how you *are* altered—but just the same too. I'd have known you anywhere. Well, come this way. I an't in any hurry. Let us walk up Regent-street. I am going to visit a friend, and that's my way. Well, I fancy you've heard of the blow-up of the Russel affair?"

"No;" replied Walter, too eager to learn any news to interrupt him by expressing indignation at the mode of delivering it.

"Lord bless me! why surely you have been living in the moon? Why they went all to pieces, not a month after you left; but no matter, I'll tell you all about it after. Do you know I'm just going to set up for myself? I've broke with my father. I have been long making up my mind to settle on my own score, for I was quite tired of the snubbing and grubbing I had to put up with, so I have resolved to have done with it quite. Fortune has smiled on me. I verily think I am the luckiest fellow ever breathed. I shan't make you my confident altogether, just at present, but when you hear my story I know you will wish me joy of my lucky fortune."

"No doubt I shall; but of course all in good

time, as you say it would not do to take me into confidence at once. But, by-the-bye, what were you saying about Mrs. Russel? I *did* hear something about her, and should like to know the particulars."

Walter strove to assume a careless tone as he inquired about the subject, which of all others the most deeply interested him, and which, in fact, was his only reason for wishing to converse with his companion; but James was too full of his own affairs to pay the least attention to his question.

"Oh yes; I'll explain it all by-and-bye. You know Mrs. Russel was monstrous extravagant; would insist on living in that fine house, though she hadn't a farthing to pay the rent, for after you left she could not get any other lodger, and she owed my father a great deal of money, and, instead of paying, she wanted to borrow more. So, no wonder, he wouldn't put up with it. But, after all, my father acted very harshly, although I don't wish to be the one to take part against him; but his conduct to me has been so shameful—so grinding and unfair, that I don't owe him any good-will. Why you wouldn't believe it, the life I had to lead the last twelve-months I stopped in his house, was really not fit for a dog. You see, I'll tell you how it was. I wanted to come to some settlement. It was

all very well, as long as I was a boy, to work and fag at the desk all day long, run errands, and serve him for nothing; but when I came up to be a man, I didn't like being his drudge. Why, I was worse off than a clerk; not only having much more work, but hadn't a penny of wages. Now, I reasoned with him and mother both on the subject, but it was all to no purpose. I wanted to get a regular salary only; I didn't ask to be taken into partnership, or anything of that sort. Not a bit of it. I only wanted a recompense for my services, moderate enough in all conscience, but just to let me have something that I might call my own. Bless you, I never had as much as a shilling that I could spend as I pleased. I got my clothes, it is true, my lodging, and my victuals, such as they were, and that was never first-rate, and sometimes no more than enough. Well, as I tell you, I tried to reason with them, I asked a very moderate sum, only a hundred pounds. Any clerk would have got twice that sum for doing what I had to do; for I was fagging from morning to night; but instead of assenting, as any man would have expected, to such a reasonable proposal, I received a flat refusal, with the greatest expressions of astonishment at my insolence in making such a request. It was quite absurd, I was told. I had no use for money, as I had everything I

wanted or sought; and as to wages, I had no right to expect any, because the business would devolve to me at the death of my father, who was, therefore, entitled to my services gratis during his lifetime. This might be all very fair, but I hardly fancied it so; and told them very plainly that I had no notion of waiting so long for my payment, as I saw no chance of the old gentleman's dying to oblige me; and I, in the meantime, wanted to enjoy myself on my own score, as I considered myself too old for leading-strings. It was all very well to be sure, but you know every one likes to have a little of his own way; and though I hadn't any desire to be extravagant, any more than they had, I didn't just like that I couldn't spend a single penny, but what they counted out, and knew where it went. So, as I found they wouldn't listen to reason, I confess I did speak a little sharp; and you know mother's temper is none of the mildest, and she fired up and rated me as if I'd been a pick-pocket. My father aided her, talking in a high style about my ingratitude. I hadn't patience to bear it. My spirit was up, and I just told them my mind plainly. They were beside themselves with passion, but I was just as determined. So we cut. I left the house, applied for a situation as clerk, in Smith and Smithers's, in Chancery-lane, got ninety pounds a year,

and peace and liberty. Hard work; but nothing like what I had with father; and then I have my own money, my own will, and my own freedom in everything. That's nine months ago, and I haven't gone near them since. I saw the old chap once. Met him in Chancery-lane, just at our office door. He looked as black as ink, and walked past without taking any notice. I didn't wish he should. I was independent, thank God, and mean to keep myself so. But I'll answer for it he'll be ready to speak to me by-and-bye, when he knows what I know. But I shan't boast, though I am as sure of my fortune as though all was signed and sealed, as the lawyers say. Bless you—what do you think I am about? You wouldn't guess between this and doomsday, I'll wager."

"No, I am a poor hand at solving mysteries. Some good-fortune, I hope," replied Walter.

"Ay, that you may guess, else I wouldn't be in such spirits nor such trim," replied James, glancing at his own apparel and brushing his hand down the front of his waistcoat with an air of superlative self-admiration. As they happened to be passing by a gas-lamp at the moment, Walter observed, for the first time, that his dress was unusually smart, and new from top to toe. "Yes," proceeded the triumphant James, "it *is* good-fortune, I believe you! And as I

know you'd never guess it, I'll tell you; though mind, you mustn't speak about it to a soul. I'm going to be married to a lady with fifty thousand pounds."

The exulting tone and pause of triumph, with which this speech was delivered, was so irresistible that, little as Walter was disposed to the mirthful mood, he could hardly restrain his risible muscles sufficiently to wish him joy; but it was enough for James that he had found a listener to whom he could pour out the fulness of his own satisfaction. His loquacity ran on unaided by any answer.

"Yes, I dare say you are surprised, but I assure you it's the fact. I have been paying my addresses to her more than six weeks; and I've got her full consent, and we are to be married next Sunday. You must not think me hasty; but I can tell you I am anxious to get it all concluded, for a bird in the hand 's worth two in the bush; and nobody knows what may occur, as a prize like that isn't to be met with every day. A charming woman too—highly accomplished—talented, indeed I may say; so you must not think I am actuated by nothing but mercenary motives. I assure you, she is the very person I should have wished for a wife, though she hadn't had a halfpenny; but of course she isn't any worse for the money. Fifty thousand pounds

will enable us to cut a good figure in the world: our natural advantages won't shine the worse for the cash. A charming woman!—I am certain you'd think so. I am just going to pay her a visit at her lodgings in Park-place. She has only a temporary lodging there; after our marriage we shall set off for her estate in Derbyshire, where we have agreed to spend the honeymoon, and then return and set up our establishment in London. Gad! I think there are two or three folks who will be a bit astonished. I question if the old gentleman will be so shy next time I meet him. I'se warrant mother will come off her high horse when she sees us riding in our carriage. We shall keep our carriage. Miss Belmont has a beautiful little chaise—open chaise—or curricle, as they call it, with two such splendid little bay mares, which she drives herself regularly round Hyde Park every day. She jokes me for being such a bad horseman; but when we are married, she says, she will give me lessons in the whip. Ha, ha! She has a deal of humour and spirit, but a charming temper—never out of humour—never saw her cross in my life—so amiable and kind to the servants; and she has two footmen in livery. I'm sure she is a pattern of good temper. It would be a capital lesson to mother, if she were to see how she behaves. Lord! mother had a temper that

would have worn out the life of a saint—always scolding or harping about something or nothing—rating the servants for every motion they made. I declare I wouldn't live the life I had with *her* for fifty thousand. And so stingy! *You* remember the dinners we used to have? Well, they grew ten times worse. I was almost famished, never got a dinner fresh cooked but on Sunday; and a leg of mutton cooked on that day was always made last the whole week. Such a table Miss Belmont keeps! Fish, flesh, and fowl, every day, and wine at every course. She hates stingy animals. Noble-spirited woman she is—splendid fortune—grand establishment, and I never saw such a generous disposition. No idea of selfishness; no pin-money or two purses. She is willing that I shall have the management of everything. Haven't I reason to bless my stars? You see what it is to have a good figure. I am sure you will quite admire Miss Belmont. I'd introduce you to her this evening, only she expects me *alone*, as we have agreed to talk over all the final settlement; but I hope to send you my card next week, after which I shall introduce her to you as Mrs. Sharpquill. Rather a better match, I think, than Miss Alice Russel, for all her high airs. Lord save the mark! but I wish her well though, and don't envy her good-fortune. I fancy you've heard of that?"

"No, indeed," replied Walter, eagerly catching at this opportunity to divert the course of this torrent of egotism, as he saw plainly that nothing could be obtained by demanding an answer, unless the information came of his own accord.

"Bless me! you seem to know nothing. Well, just let's walk up the park a bit, and I'll tell you all about it. Clara will be impatient; but never mind, I can soon please her by the excuse of having met an old friend. She is the most social and considerate creature living. Well, I'll tell you. After Mrs. Russel went to pieces, as I told you, father called a sale of the furniture and effects; and no wonder, for people would have their own, and she was in debt to all the tradesfolks round and round. Well, what do you think? Gardiner bought everything—the furniture, fixtures, and all things. He attended the sale, and bid for every article that was set up. Can't think what had been his motives; but you know he was always an odd, eccentric sort of fellow. Father said it was spite at *him;* they owed each other a grudge of long standing, and by taking part with the Russels, I fancy he thought to humble father. Be that as it may, the things were bought, and the money duly paid; and, as Mrs. Russel had not any *great* debt but what she

owed my father, there was plenty to pay all creditors. Gardiner stood out against father about the interest of the debt he claimed, for which he held some jewels that belonged to Alice; but father had the law on his side, and, would you believe it? Gardiner ended the matter by paying the debt *entire*, and purchasing back the jewels. Everybody was astonished; but he was a strange fish, and had a deal of cash, but not so much as people fancied; for I believe he spent the most of it in that business. He had a great fondness for the Russels. I don't know how it was, but Mrs. Russel took all the business sadly to heart, and wouldn't live any longer at the house. All the furniture was privately disposed of, and she set off, God knows where. I've since heard she was dead. As to Miss Alice, there are strange stories told about her. They said she went to be a governess at a lady's house in the country, but came off in about a twelvemonth in a high quarrel. By-the-bye, I fancy you've heard Gardiner's daughter is married."

"Yes; but go on with your story."

"Well, I don't know where she's staid for six or eight months past; but I heard the other day, that she is living with a great Earl—I forget his name. She went to be companion, as they call it, to his daughter, and——Lord bless

me! sure that can't be Miss Belmont's chaise? No, surely—oh, no: quite a different-looking person. I wondered that it *could* be her, for she never goes out after dinner.—Well, as I was telling you, she went to be companion to this Earl's daughter; but the Earl himself found her such a pleasant companion, that he thought prudent to take her to himself, and I hear they are married. Bless me, Deverell, how you started! One would think you were astonished at the news; but I assure you it is perfectly true. I had it from a certain authentic source—from a person who was present at the ceremony, which was performed privately at the Earl's residence in Derbyshire. They mean to keep it a secret for a time, I fancy, for the Earl's family are mighty proud; but she is legally his wife, and I have no doubt will be brought up to town and introduced to the world as such. Well, she was always a high-flown damsel, and I fancy she has not got higher than she always expected. Mrs. Russel used to fill her head with all sorts of absurd notions, until I really believe she did not know which end of her was uppermost. Mrs. Russel *had* it always that she was some great person's child; and I have even heard it asserted, that the old lady had her own reasons for that notion. It's nobody's business; but I don't think Mrs. Russel would have taken all

that trouble with a child that nobody owned or cared about. And the jewels, too; and Gardiner's buying them back in the manner he did. It's an odd story altogether; but I'm sure I wish her well. I'm so lucky and fortunate myself, that I needn't envy anybody. But, by-the-bye, Deverell, what are you about? Have you set up as a surgeon? On my life, you look monstrous thin and pale—havn't been ill, I hope?"

"I have not been very well lately; but I am hindering you; do not detain yourself any longer."

"Thank you, thank you—you're right. On my word, it is really very ungallant to keep Clara waiting. I've no doubt she's all impatience. But don't let this be our last meeting. Where are you living? Let me have a card, that I may know where to find you."

"I am on the point of changing my lodging, so it would be useless; but——."

"Well, never mind: you must call on me—you know where I'm to be found, always almost at Miss Belmont's. But, by-the-bye, I shan't ask you to come this week.——'Pon my soul, now a thought strikes me. It is a capital idea—you might be best man at the wedding. What do you say to that? But I mustn't think of any final promise, until I can say all is secure. Why the devil can't you give your address?

But never mind: call on me at my lodgings, Cecil-street, Strand, and I'll tell you if Miss Belmont consents that you shall be best man. Lord bless me! surely that isn't nine o'clock striking? Good-bye, good-bye: I shall see you soon—I havn't a moment to stop," and, scarcely waiting to shake hands, James broke from his companion, and set off at full speed towards Park-place, leaving Walter standing alone on the west side of the Park. Glad to get quit of this tiresome acquaintance, who was too fully occupied by his own affairs to think or care for any other subject, Walter walked slowly, heedless of whither he went, and finding himself once more alone, began to reflect on all he had just heard.

The history of James's good-fortune would at any other time have afforded him much entertainment; but his mind was too much engrossed by the other parts of his intelligence to consider the subject, or to laugh at the absurd manner of his informant. Walter had never esteemed James Sharpquill; indeed, during the period of their youthful association, he had always regarded him as an object of contempt, or, at best, the butt of his frequent ridicule; and perhaps this was the first instance in which he had regarded his words as of the slightest importance. Had James attempted to assert any-

thing prejudicial to the honour or dignity of Alice, he would have met with contempt, and probably instant punishment; for wounded and injured as were now the feelings which linked our hero to her he had loved, they were still too strong to be tampered with with impunity. But James had spoken of her with respect. All that he had related was to her honour, and therefore all must be perfectly true. Then she was the wife of another. That thought fell heavy on his heart.

With a desperate feeling of despair, he struck his clenched hands on his burning brow. He ground his set teeth, and hurried onward, as if flying from himself. A tumult of passion strove in his breast, and for some time his agitation was too powerful to admit even of a connected train of thought. At length the first chaos of emotion passed away. He slackened his pace. He paused; and, for the first time since he had parted from James, looked round and observed where he was. He was still in the Regent's Park, though now at the northern end of the outer circle. He stood on the footpath; it was now quite dark,—there were few walkers; and as he leant against the paling which surrounded the enclosure, he was in perfect solitude. He paused, partly with a view to collect his scattered thoughts, and partly to rest his wearied limbs;

for, in fact, he felt too exhausted to proceed. As he leant on the paling, and wiped the cold sweat from his face, he now questioned himself on the cause of such emotion. Wherefore did the intelligence he had just heard have such an effect on him? Did the marriage of Alice Russel in any way alter *his* destiny? Was he not parted for ever from her? Had she not shown, long, long ago, that *he* could never share her fate? And had he not as long renounced the hope of ever doing so? Nay, had he not renounced the hope of ever again beholding her? Wherefore, then, did he feel thus at hearing of her happiness? Surely, his emotion must be envy; for, since he could never have shared her fate, what was it to him whom she might choose for her companion through life? If he had heard of her dishonour, if misfortune or shame had been her lot, he might have found a reason for his regret; but, as it was, why should her good fortune grieve him? Walter trembled at this last question, for he scarcely dared own what he felt for a moment—that even her shame and dishonour would not have affected him so bitterly.

The Regent's Park had been a favourite walk of Alice and Walter, and the spot was hallowed with a thousand associations of that happy period; and now he was here alone. All was the

same. No change could be traced on the well-remembered scene; and the clear rays of a bright full moon shone distinctly on the surrounding prospect. In the distance was heard the sound of music. An itinerant band of musicians were exerting their skill in the open road, before the houses at the entrance of the park. They were playing a well-known air,—one which Walter had often heard them play in former days, when he had paused to listen; and when the light pressure of Alice's arm on his clung closer in sympathy as they listened to the enchanting notes. Music is dear to the soul of those who love. It speaks to the heart, in that language which love alone can feel and reply to. But now its echoes rang mournfully in Walter's ear. They awakened the chords of long-forgotten feelings; and though sympathizing with his sadness, they spoke only of desolation; and visions of by-gone days floated across his brain, as if wafted by the sound of those mournful and well-known strains. Yet his soul was softened, if not soothed; and the anguish, which had racked his very heart-strings, now gave place to a calm and saddened melancholy; and, ere the strain had ceased, Walter felt a tear steal down his cheek, the first that for many a year had moistened his aching eyes. Yet he hastily brushed it away, blushing at his unmanly weak-

ness; and, ashamed at himself for thus yielding to emotion, he turned away lest the melody which had thus unmanned him should be renewed. It was now late, and Walter was far from home; he therefore quickened his pace, as he began to think on the alarm which poor Lewis must feel at his unusually prolonged stay.

At the entrance of the park, his attention was attracted to a carriage which drove in with tremendous speed, and which, from the spattered wheels, over-driven horses, and heavy-laden roof, seemed to be newly arrived from a long journey. The windows were open, and as it drove rapidly past him, Walter distinctly saw a female face, which he instantly recognised. It was Alice. He stood fixed, as if rooted to the spot; but the carriage wheeled past with velocity; and, before he could collect his scattered thoughts, was gone out of sight. To have overtaken it would have been impossible, even had he wished it; but he did not. It is true, the sight of that face had awakened his emotions anew, for the moment; but it only served to confirm the truth of that intelligence which had blasted his hopes. Brief and hurried as that glance had been, he had not the slightest hesitation that it was Alice; and although he could not distinguish her companion, he saw that there was another person in the carriage. He saw, too, that the other was a man.

There was no doubt that it was her husband. *Her husband!* these words ought to command him to forget her for ever.

Walter reached his home. The kind welcome and anxious inquiries of Lewis failed to give even their wonted comfort; yet he had more need of comfort from that humble friend, than he had had for many days past. Anxious to get rid of all intrusion on his thoughts, he retired as soon as possible to his own room. Lewis slept in the adjoining apartment; but as Walter gave the excuse of having a letter to write, he knew there was no chance of his attempting to intrude on his solitude.

When he found himself alone, he hastened to unlock his desk, from which he took those long-cherished and once precious pledges of a love now so fatal and forbidden. The poem written by Alice, which she had addressed to him with her own hand, and given to him before his departure, was now taken from that often-sought repository, to be looked on for the last time. "To Walter Deverell." These words, in her handwriting, and the nature of the lines which they preceded, would have proved, to every eye, that she had perjured herself. Perhaps to one who loved her less, this proof of her avowed attachment would have stood against her; but Walter loved too deeply to wrong her, and felt her per-

jury too keenly to avenge it. His hand trembled as he lifted this fatal paper. He hesitated for a moment, but overcoming his weakness, committed it to the flames. Another relic now only remained. He intended that it should share the same fate; but as he took it up, his resolution failed him. He gazed on it. It was the last pledge he had received. A ringlet of her hair; —a ringlet which had rested on that brow on which he had gazed so often, and loved so well. Yet why should he keep it? The brow it had shaded, now graced the coronet of her titled lord; and the hand that bestowed it on him was now linked in eternal wedlock with another. Still he hesitated.

None could blame him for retaining a silent pledge. It betrayed no secret. A single lock of dark hair bore no identity that could be traced to any individual. Many a lovely brow was shaded by ringlets as dark and glossy. He alone knew to whom this belonged, and wherefore need he deny himself the last sad consolation of retaining it, now when all else was fled? He replaced the locket in his desk, and closed it. He leant his head on his hand. His brain seemed on fire, and a mist thickened before his eyes. He rose, but his limbs felt stiff and powerless, and a cold chill ran through his frame. He sat down again. At that moment Lewis

knocked softly at the door to summon him to supper. Attempting to conquer this unusual feeling, he sat down at table, and strove to partake of the meal and enter into conversation. His spirits flagged. He loathed the food. His head felt as if bursting with anguish. A confusion of ideas and a feeling of dizziness followed; while a thousand objects, faces, and forms, swam before him, which he struggled in vain to disperse, for he felt he was becoming delirious; and the burning heat of his hands, the glassy eye, and hectic cheek, showed plainly the presence of fever. Walter had a strong mind, but his frame, worn and exhausted by long trials and anxiety, sank under the struggle. At midnight he was stretched on his couch, in the high excitement of a raging fever.

CHAPTER VIII.

"PEACE to the dead!" Such has been the maxim of all ages; but although every reasoning and feeling mind would naturally abide by that law, the rules of society, in some instances, demand its transgression. As regards the living, it is but just and reasonable that man should exert his power to restrain, commend, or punish the actions of his fellow-man, according to the rules and conduct best suited for society; but as regards the dead, it seems a sacrilege to extend his authority or exert his power over the senseless clay, when the soul which animated it has fled; whither he knows not, but beyond the reach of his sympathies, or of the possibility of his control. Yet such is attempted. Punishment and ignominy are extended even to the grave, where worldly scorn and earthly vengeance are exerted over the senseless remains of one whose only crime was that of quitting this earthly existence. Such things were, but we rejoice to say they are no longer. The age of bigotry and superstition is passed away; and the relics of the wretched suicide, though unhonoured, are

permitted to rest unmolested, while the punishment of their transgression is left to a higher tribunal.

In the case of Mr. Gardiner, it was too clearly proved that his death was voluntary. A strong poison, which must have terminated life in a few seconds, had done the work of death. He left no writing or statement of his reasons for committing the act; but the regular and accurate arrangement of all his affairs, which he had himself concluded not many hours before doing the deed, was too sure an evidence that his intellects were in no way deranged at the time. To all who knew him, and to Alice in particular, who now recalled all their conversation on that night previous to his decease, it was evident that Mr. Gardiner was weary of life. The strong affections of his heart had no object to cling to. The tie which bound him to the world was broken. He felt, as he had expressed himself, as if he had nothing to live for; and sought death as a release from the unsupportable burden of a joyless existence. As he had justly reasoned, there were few, if any, that his death could give pain to, and none whom it could materially injure. As to his feelings with regard to the extent of his crime, and its punishment hereafter, we presume not to question, but

leave it to that mighty mystery into which mortal judgment dare not and cannot penetrate.

As regarded the worldly property of Mr. Gardiner, there was, as he said, little to dispose of; and it was not until the will was read that Alice learnt the full extent of his generosity. It now appeared, that in paying Mrs. Russel's debts, and the subsequent purchase of the jewels, he had expended almost the whole of his property. This had been done with the consent of Emma; and, by mutual agreement, they had preferred doing a generous action to their beloved friends, to retaining wealth which, to hearts like theirs, had no advantage but in proportion to the happiness it could bestow. Had Mr. Gardiner lived, doubtless he had hoped to have again amassed as much as he had thus expended; and although ever ready to give what he possessed, he toiled eagerly to attain more, with no view of avarice, but that he might be enabled to bestow his gains in what most delighted his honest and generous heart. Few men lived like Mr. Gardiner; but he did live, and even now lives in the memory of those whose love and gratitude wept over his unhonoured grave, with tears more hallowed, and prayers more heartfelt, than ever moistened or sanctified the loftiest monument that vanity ever raised, or superstition blessed.

The feelings of Alice under these painful circumstances can easily be conceived. Such were the horror and stupefaction that for many days possessed her faculties, that she hardly knew the extent of her misfortune; and it was not until the first shock was partly over, that she was fully aware of what had occurred.

There was something too painful in this event to bear even reflecting on, so as to indulge in that sorrow with which in general the soul is relieved. To fly from thought was the only relief, and to quit a scene which recalled the remembrance of such horror.

It was some weeks before Alice felt sufficiently collected to form any plan for her future conduct. She received letters from Lady Mary expressive of the most affectionate condolence, with the most earnest entreaties to return to live with her. She and her husband were on the point of quitting England for Germany, where they were to reside for the ensuing season, and they anxiously requested Alice to accompany them.

Alice returned to Matlock, where she was received with the most affectionate regard; and if all the kindness that friendship could bestow would have restored her to happiness and spirits, she certainly might have ceased to lament with such bitterness the loss of her best and earliest

friends. But the friendship of early youth can never be replaced. The associations formed in after life, though often as lasting, are never so dear. They can never link with the feelings of our hearts, and live in our after existence.

Lady Mary was a kind, affectionate friend; but Emma was the friend of Alice's childhood, the companion of her happiest days—days which were now dearer to her memory than aught she had to hope for in futurity. She loved her kind friends, but their affection failed to supply the place of what she had lost. Much to the disappointment of Lady Mary, and every other member of the family, Alice steadily refused to accompany them abroad. She had many reasons against doing so. Little as there was to bind her to England, she felt reluctant to quit it. In England she had passed her happiest days, and there alone could she hope to enjoy happiness, if such was yet in store for her in the roll of fate.

We cannot at present question or explain all her private reasons; but certain it was, that no argument could prevail to shake her resolution, and finding all reasoning unavailable, her kind friends could do nothing further than exert their utmost to render her comfortable and happy in her determination. As she resolutely refused all pecuniary obligations, delicacy naturally for-

bore to offer them. She resolved to continue to maintain herself by her own exertions; and as soon as all was arranged, set about inquiring the means by which that could be secured. The means was now in her power. She was not as formerly unknown; for the acquaintance of Sir Thomas Foster's mother was in itself a sufficient recommendation to procure a situation in the highest family.

The Earl of Dartmore was a nobleman of high rank and splendid fortune. He was just returned from India. His wife was recently dead, and his only daughter, a girl of about Alice's age, had wished for a companion. A high salary and a permanent home were offered to any accomplished, well-educated young female, who would consent to devote herself to soothe the present affliction, and share the amusements of Lady Charlotte Astley, and Alice determined to offer herself as that companion. No situation of the sort presented so many advantages. Lady Charlotte was represented by all who knew her, as an amiable, highly gifted young woman, and of a disposition calculated to inspire affection, and bestow happiness on those who lived with her. Besides, Alice was anxious to be independent; for, although not avaricious, she had known enough of the want of money to be fully aware that it was necessary. Poor Alice! she was a

friendless, unguided being. She anxiously wished to bestow happiness on those she loved, and bitter experience had taught her that happiness was too often founded on worldly possessions. She wished much to be able to assist Mrs. Russel, to whom she owed more than filial gratitude; but, unless that assistance could be obtained by her own exertions, she felt it would have been more pain than pleasure. Her friends would have willingly assisted her; but assistance, unless absolutely necessary, is seldom grateful to a young and independent spirit; and, however kind and affectionate the conduct of the giver, the receiver of benefits must always feel in some degree dependent.

With this consciousness, Alice resolutely parted from her kind friends, whom she rejoiced to see all united in perfect harmony. Long suffering had taught Lady Mary to prize more dearly than ever, those delights which she had long deplored as lost. Nevertheless, they wished to quit England, as it had been the scene of misfortunes, which, in spite of renewed happiness, would sometimes intrude on their thoughts; and as the sister of Lady Mary kindly pressed them to visit her, they agreed to retire to the beautiful village of ——, where she resided, and seek in peace and solitude that happiness which had been denied them in the gay scenes of social

life. Lady Foster was devoted to the gaieties of life, but she loved her son too well to part from him.

"Never mind," said she smiling gaily; "I will be sure to bring him again to England, and we shall meet again after this whim of self-exile has taken its course. You see I had power to restore him to life, and I fear not but I shall succeed in restoring him to its social pleasures."

On the evening before they quitted England, Lady Foster introduced Alice for the first time to Lady Charlotte Astley. The interview was short, as they were introduced amid the bustle of a mixed company, at an assembly at the Wells. Lady Charlotte was dressed in deep mourning; and her pensive air and melancholy deportment indicated, to Alice's interested observation, a rooted sorrow, with which she deeply sympathized. Her manner was somewhat cold, but condescending and amiable. She did not remain many minutes in the room; but at parting she shook hands affably with Alice, and expressed her wish that they should become better acquainted.

The conversation of some of the company turned on her ladyship, after she quitted the saloon. They talked much of her splendid fortune, her *consequent* virtues, her deep affliction at the death of her mother, and her unparalleled

devotion to the wishes and comforts of her father, whose ill health had for some time rendered him a perfect invalid, and secluded her from all society. At her age, with her beauty, talents, and fortune, educated in the luxury of an Eastern land, Lady Charlotte was a perfect miracle of duty and self-immolation—giving up all the gaieties of life and mirth, to attend on the sick chamber and soothe the peevish whims of an old valetudinarian. The earl was passionately fond of her, and could not bear her to pay attention to any one but himself; therefore she had few, if any, acquaintances, so no wonder that she wished for a companion of her own age to amuse her solitude. Such was the temper of the earl, that few would consent to become an inmate of his house; but the affectionate disposition and condescending nature of Lady Charlotte, would amply make amends to any one who could appreciate her kindness.

We shall omit the details of our heroine's parting from her kind friends, who set out for Germany in high spirits, and with every prospect of a continuation of that happiness, which had so long been dead to the now joyous and grateful Lady Mary, who strove, by assiduous attention to her husband's wishes, and affection to his mother, to prove that she no longer harboured the jealous and peace-destroying feelings,

which had been the bane of her former days. The transient interest which she may have excited in this narrative, will, we trust, bear no comparison with that which our readers will feel for the fate of our heroine, whom we shall now follow through the various events of her checkered life.

It was about four in the afternoon of a fine July day, when Alice arrived at the residence of the Earl of Dartmore, with all the necessary accompaniments of trunks, cloaks, &c., comprising all her property, real and personal. The journey was not far, it being only five miles from Matlock to the mansion of Dartmore,—a beautiful and aristocratic-looking villa, surrounded by an extensive park. Alice looked from the window of the carriage, as it drove slowly up the broad and winding sweep which led to the lofty portico; and, for the first time, she felt her self-possession fail her, as she thought of her introduction to the inhabitants of this splendid dwelling. She had felt confused and diffident, when she first arrived at Lady Mary Foster's; but her feelings then, though anxious and perplexed, were of a different nature. Her anxiety then, was more as regarded the reception she should meet with, the temper or conduct of the stranger with whom she was to dwell,—and her perplexity arose merely from her ignorance on

these points; but now she felt at a loss how to act, whatever might be her reception. The manners, habits, and style of all that she now beheld, were so different from anything she had ever been accustomed to.

We would not have it believed that our heroine felt awed by the superior rank of her new situation, or that she felt any additional respect for the possessors (merely as such) of all this magnificence,—not in the least; but as she had been little in society, far less in those circles where gorgeous pageantry is familiar, it cannot be deemed surprising, that a slight palpitation of heart, a faltering step, a perplexity of feeling, and, in short, a general confusion of thought and action, took place in the uninitiated mind of poor Alice, as she passed through the hall, and ascended the lofty staircase, through a line of obsequious and liveried attendants; who, loudly proclaiming her name from one to the other, conducted her to the apartment where Lady Charlotte Astley was seated to receive her. As they had met before, there was little ceremony required. Her ladyship rose and welcomed our heroine with much courtesy, and a manner which partook more of natural *hauteur*, than studied formality. Yet she was sufficiently condescending and even kind, as she expressed her anxiety for her guest's fatigue, ordered the servant in

waiting to serve luncheon instantly, and, ringing the bell, desired a French waiting-maid (who appeared) to show Miss Russel to her apartments.

"You will be more refreshed by changing your dress," said she to Alice, "and then Mignay will show you to luncheon. Excuse my attending you, as I must write a note for papa."

Alice, of course, excused her. Mignay was all officiousness, and conducted her to a splendid suite of rooms, which she informed her were for her use.

"My lady has superintended the furnishing herself, and I am sure you'll find all things *charmant*. Lady Charlotte has a superb taste, and so considerate. She has been talking of you for these ten days, and has thought of nothing but how to make you most *comfortable*, as she says;—dear considerate creature! I'm sure you will love her exquisitely. Pardonnez moi, may I be permitted to assist you? My lady's desire is that you should command my services the same as herself, until your woman arrives; she was engaged a week ago,—but she couldn't leave the Countess D——, her present lady, until *she* had another maid provided. My dear lady has been all anxiety on your account. Poor dear lady! she has much need of a friend. Ah me!

I strive all my poor endeavours to divert her mind from that grief she *will* indulge. She took her dear mamma's death so much to heart, the physicians thought she wouldn't recover it; and even now she takes on so sadly, that I'm certain it must injure her health. And then the confinement too. I'm sure it must kill her; and then the earl is so severe, so fretful. But no matter;—that's none of my business. His lordship is a sad invalid, and I'm afraid poor dear Lady Charlotte will be the martyr to his whims and caprices, as her dear amiable mamma was before her. Ah, dear lady! if you could only exert your influence, it's to be hoped, having you for a friend and counsellor, she won't let it have such an effect on her as it has now. Charming gauze that, ma'am. Permit me just to set your scarf—the least in the world. Beautiful!—I entreat you, ma'am, to be so very good as not say a word to Lady Charlotte of what I've been talking, as she will be so very angry. She does not wish that any one should know what she suffers. Permit me—your handkerchief—your fan. The heat is very oppressive; and I fear you'll find the room too close, as the earl won't allow a breath of air. James, show Miss Russel to the luncheon-room."

As Miss Russel had not deemed it necessary to make any reply to the whole of this length-

ened harangue, which had continued, without any remark on her part, during the time of her changing her travelling dress for another, she did not think it requisite to enter into any engagement of secrecy; but, as may be supposed, she felt no inclination to repeat any of the communicative Abigail's conversation.

Ushered by James, a powdered lackey, Alice entered the luncheon-room, where she found, already seated at table, Lady Charlotte and her father, the formidable Earl of Dartmore. His lordship bowed his head courteously as she entered, without offering to rise from the sofa on which he lay, supported by pillows; but one glance at his countenance was sufficient evidence to plead his excuse for not exerting himself further, as the pale sallow hue of his features, sharpened by emaciation, bore the traces of recent and severe sickness.

The earl appeared to be above sixty, certainly not older; though long residence in a foreign clime had impaired the colour of a complexion, which had once been fair and bright as England's first lineal Saxon hue. His face had still the remains of what had once been termed handsome, and his form, far above common stature, had once been moulded in that symmetry which in former days had attracted the glance of envious rivalry, or the smile of admiring beauty. The

earl had been admired. He had mingled amid gay and courtly scenes, his youth had been spent among that society where grace and magnificence are the sole object of pursuit. He had exulted in the smiles of royalty,—the envied favourite and leading star of circles, where he shone the brightest, because nature had gifted him above his compeers. Envy, though she looked askance upon his higher honours and superior powers, had failed to slander a character which had ever stood as high as his good fortune; and as is too rarely the case, although eminently distinguished by nature and fortune, the earl had kept free from every vice that lures the favourite of pleasure, and every fraud or shadow of dishonour, that can sully the fame of one who is possessed of wealth, which chance events have placed in his power, unsought and unlooked for. But with all this, his day was gone by. Rich, noble, respected, of an age still capable of mingling in life's busy scene, and enjoying its pleasures, the Earl of Dartmore found himself obliged to quit the living world, to abandon society, and retire to solitude and gloom, where death was looked forward to as the only and happy release from an existence which could never again be cheered by earthly gladness. Disease, fell disease, was the sole cause of this change; bodily anguish, against the power of which no mental reasoning

has ever yet learnt to withstand. A cancer, the most fearful of mortal maladies, had long been spreading its embryo roots in his frame; but, of late years, it had made such progress as to be beyond the power of human skill to retard or even to alleviate the excruciating tortures which became too painful to suffer him any respite. After having tried every remedy in vain, and finding it impossible to mingle in society, or enjoy any of its pleasures, he sought solitude and freer air, with no hope but that of dying in peace.

"My father is a sad invalid," said Lady Charlotte, as she presented our heroine, before they sat down, "but you must pardon any little neglect on that score; and papa, I dare say, will be as attentive as he can to one whom I hope soon to call *my* friend."

"Assuredly, dear Charlotte, *your* friends must be mine; that is, if Miss Russel will not shrink from my friendship. But surely, if I mistake not, we have met before. What is your name, child? I know it. Russel did you say? No, that was not the name."

"Yes, my lord; Alice Russel," replied our heroine, though the colour mounted to her cheek at this unintentional question. She felt almost as though she had been uttering a falsehood, and yet she knew of no other name to

which in fact she bore a legitimate claim; for the circumstances of her birth and origin were so involved in mystery, that she felt averse to confiding them to any one.

"Alice Russel—ay, now when I remember, that *was* the name; and I shall never forget your face. No matter, perhaps you have forgotten me. It is more than two years ago."

Here the earl looked hard in her face as he spoke, and, for the first time, Alice recognised the person whom she saw in the office of Mr. ——, the bill-broker, to whose domicile our readers may perhaps remember her fruitless visit.

"Now, when I remember," said she, colouring, "I think I recognise your lordship; but I then saw you for only a few minutes, and——"

"I am so terribly altered now, that you could not recognise me. Ay, is it not that?" said the earl, smiling, with an affable kindness that agreed but ill with the representations of his temper which Alice had listened to. "Well, no matter, we must get acquainted now; and it is not likely I shall leave you time to forget me. Charlotte, my love, I am loath to trouble you; but this cushion at my side lies uneasy. Will you just assist me?"

Lady Charlotte made no reply, but, ringing the bell, ordered the footman, who appeared "to

assist the Earl." The stifled groan of agony, the quivering of the pale lip of the sufferer during the slight change of position necessary to his comfort, touched the heart of Alice with a thrill of pity; but Lady Charlotte sat perfectly unconcerned. Perhaps she was accustomed to witness his painful emotion, so constantly before her eyes that she had learned to behold it with calmness; or perhaps she was too intent on a paragraph of the Court Journal, which she had just taken up, to perceive its paroxysm.

"You see how helpless I am," said the Earl, forcing a smile as he was once more laid on his recumbent position. "I hope you will not be too alarmed, for I am not always so useless. A recent increase of pain has rendered me worse these few days past; but I trust it will not continue."

"Do you read the Court Journal?" asked Lady Charlotte, addressing herself to Alice, who replied in the negative.

"Ay, I dare say you have no occasion for it. Lady Foster is a complete journal of fashion herself. She knows every incident and event that goes on in the gay world. I have seen but little of her; but I have been astonished how, living retired and even out of England as she has done, she can know all that has happened as she does. But I am told she has a vast correspondence,

and that she kept it up during all the time of her residence abroad with her son, when he was believed to be dead. She is a perfect Lady Mary Montagu, I am told; but for my part, I cannot understand how people can be *bored* writing letters. Of all things in the world, that seems to me the most tiresome. I declare, much as I wish to hear from all my dear friends in London, I could not promise to correspond with any one of them, just for fear of the *bore*. Do you write letters, Miss Russel?"

"Sometimes, but I have few to write to."

Here the recollection of her lost friend rose on Alice's memory, and she looked down to conceal her emotion.

"Ah, to be sure, when it is a novelty perhaps; but where one is bored to death with a thousand creatures for which one cares nothing, and obliged to answer notes, cards, &c., that one knows nothing about, the case is very different. Papa there, unfortunately for me, has an endless train of correspondents; and, as I must answer every one of them, I have enough ado without forming any new alliances in the epistolary line."

"Well, dear Charlotte," said the Earl kindly, "if you had only expressed this dislike at any time, it could have been easily remedied. I fancied you liked being my amanuensis, else I

should long ere now have found another to have supplied that place."

Lady Charlotte tossed her head. "My duty of course commands me to obey silently whatever your lordship may be pleased to enjoin."

"You are a good dutiful girl, Charlotte; nor do I feel insensible to your kindness; but I would not have you devote too much to me. The day is fine, my love. Miss Russel would no doubt like to see the grounds, and a drive round the park would do you good."

"Indeed, I thank you. If Miss Russel wishes it, I will order the carriage; but I trust she will excuse my accompanying her, as I am sick even to death of every part of the grounds, and I cannot bear the broiling sun in the park."

"Then, dear child, perhaps Miss Russel will keep you company in-doors. Go, leave me to myself. I am a cross-grained peevish invalid, and you will be more comfortable with each other. Take Miss Russel to the cabinet; show her your favourite collections, and I have no doubt she and you will be both able to amuse each other."

"If Miss Russel has any curiosity, she can look at the cabinet herself; though it is not very likely that one who has been used to live in the *existing* world will care for a parcel of old shells and petrifactions, when she has seen a thousand

times better specimens in the British Museum. How I wish I were once again in London!"

Here Lady Charlotte sighed deeply, and rising from the table walked listlessly to the window, where she leant against the recess, a perfect semblance of discontent and ennui.

"Charlotte, my love, speak to me," said the Earl, raising himself with an effort; but Charlotte either did not hear his faint voice, or did not choose to answer him.

The Earl sighed and leant back on his weary couch. Lady Charlotte yawned, stood looking out at the window for some minutes, then slowly pacing towards a large mirror, stood arranging her long fair curls with listless apathy.

"How pale I look! Don't I, Miss Russel?" said she, appealing to our heroine, without even turning her head.

"I cannot judge," replied Alice, "not knowing enough of your ladyship's general appearance to perceive any change."

"No, to be sure! and indeed there is little to *perceive;* for during this last twelvemonth I have been pretty much the same day after day. This life of dull monotony cannot be long in destroying a constitution so little suited—but no matter, it shall not be said that I have murmured at my duty."

"Do not weary, dear Charlotte,' said her

father, with a smile, the bitter expression of which stung Alice to the soul; "your duty is certainly irksome, but the task will perhaps be ended sooner than you dream of."

Lady Charlotte tossed her head, and passed her fingers carelessly along the strings of a splendid harp; and then, bending over the pedestal, she ran over the chords with studied but scientific symphony. The Earl was passionately fond of music. At the sound his dim eye brightened.

"Nay, that's my own Charlotte," said he, raising his head, with a pleased smile. "Play one of your favourite airs, and let me hear your voice. You cannot think how much it soothes my pain."

"Indeed! I dare say; but I am quite tired to death of what you call my *favourite* airs. What was one's favourite ten years ago can't always be *kept on*. I protest, I feel quite disgusted at all my music, and there seems no chance of getting any new pieces, though I have written a dozen times for them. I am absolutely *ennuied* to death;" and, at these words, her ladyship walked away to the other end of the room, and stretched herself on a sofa, with an expression of utter apathy.

Alice felt at once shocked and confused, and her feelings were divided between pity for the poor invalid, and disgust at the unfeeling conduct of his daughter.

"Charlotte, my love, will you ring the bell?" said the Earl, after a pause.

"Oh certainly—certainly," exclaimed she, with a start, as if suddenly and disagreeably roused from slumber. "I beg ten thousand pardons; I forgot myself only for a moment. I was fatigued from want of sleep;" and hastening across the room, with affected trepidation, she pulled the bell with considerable violence.

"Wheel the couch into the next room," said the Earl, as two attendants obeyed this loud summons. "Adieu, Miss Russel. You must excuse me till dinner-time. Good-bye, Charlotte, my love. Try and recover your spirits—never mind me—I shall ask all I want: go and amuse yourself, my love." And the couch, on which lay the exhausted sufferer, was wheeled into an adjoining apartment.

The moment the door, which separated the rooms, was closed, Lady Charlotte, whose flushed cheek and frowning brow had given signs of her indignation ever since the request to ring the bell, now flung herself back into a chair, and burst into a torrent of tears.

Surprise and contempt kept Alice silent, which was as well, for she could not have bestowed the least consolation. Lady Charlotte was accustomed to vent the excess of her feelings in that manner, and any attempt to allay the excess of the paroxysm, would only have prolonged its duration.

At length, having sobbed to her heart's content, she exclaimed,

"Is it not enough that I should sacrifice all that I most value without a murmur, and devote myself to be the slave of his whims and caprices, but he must insult me in a most bitter and cruel manner, whenever I venture to express a feeling, or utter a wish? Oh, Miss Russel, you see what I endure;—but no matter, I must bear all—I only pray Heaven, on my part, that it may not last long."

Had Alice made any reply it would have been of a nature little calculated to mitigate her ladyship's sense of injury; but dreading to give any utterance to her thoughts, she remained silent. Lady Charlotte, finding no appearance of sympathy, wiped away her tears, the effects of passion, and sullenly taking up a splendid album, which lay on the table, commenced looking over the plates in silence. Alice sat for a considerable time at a loss what to do, and, as may be conceived, under the influence of far from pleasant feelings, until the disagreeable pause was broken in upon by the entrance of Lady Charlotte's woman, Mignay, who appeared laden with several large band-boxes.

"Here they are at last, my lady, just arrived, express you know, from Paris, forwarded by Madame Desvignes, the moment they were *out*."

"What are *they?* What *are* you talking about, Mignay? I never ordered these band-boxes."

"No, my lady; but you know you expressed a wish to have a dress *a-la-tullé*, like that which you read of the Marchioness of Landsdowne wearing, in last week's Court Journal, and your papa desired that I should give orders for it, and many more things besides, which are sent here. Do, my dear lady, permit me to unpack them?"

"Take them away; take them out of my sight, Mignay, for mercy's sake! How, in Heaven's name, could you be so cruel as talk to me of these things, when you know it reminds me of my poor dear mamma? Take them away! The very mention of Madame Desvignes puts me frantic."

After a few sighs and ejaculations of pity and disappointment, the Abigail withdrew with her rejected treasures, eager no doubt to examine them herself; and Lady Charlotte, too much the prey of bad temper to feel interest in anything, flung herself on the sofa in a fit of sullen silence.

"Have you ever felt what it was to lose a beloved friend?" exclaimed she, after a long pause.

Alice sighed; but before she had needed to reply, her ladyship proceeded.

"Because if you have, you will sympathize in my feelings, at the torture I undergo, by the constant grossness of those, who, by recalling the recollections of my loss, tear open afresh the wounds of my heart. It is cruelty in the extreme. The farce of attempting to console one who is inconsolable, serves no purpose, but to harrow up the feelings. It is cruel; nay, downright inhuman of papa, to refer continually to circumstances which, he must be well aware, give me unspeakable anguish. But it is my fate, and I must submit to it without useless repining. I feel tired to death. Dear me! I declare it is only half-past five o'clock. It is an hour and a half yet to dinner-time; what do you say to a drive in the park, as we have ample time? I'll order the carriage." And her ladyship instantly ordered it; and summoning Mignay, bade her fetch her bonnet and scarf, and Miss Russel's; and without consulting Miss Russel's wishes on the subject, hurried her away to drive round the park.

As our readers have seen enough in the foregoing pages to judge of what would be the probable nature of her ladyship's conversation, we shall not detail that which took place during the drive; suffice it to say, that when she returned to the mansion, Alice had concluded in her own mind, that Lady Charlotte Astley was

not a person with whom she would voluntarily continue to reside any longer than circumstances might render it necessary. Alice was not the first who had come to that conclusion, but circumstances had detained many long after they had wished to quit her society. Lady Charlotte was rich, and in that magical word volumes may be read. It is the spell which too often binds friendship, love, and kindness, in far stronger bonds than all those virtues that poets and enthusiasts deem the ties which link these affections.

Except her father, Lady Charlotte had no other living relation. She was his only child, and that dearest of all *only* children, the only one that survived of a large family, all fondly beloved, and who in dying had transferred all the love they claimed to the sole survivor. Of five sons and four daughters, all of whom had lived long enough to win the affection of their parents, Charlotte alone remained, the sole inheritor of an immense fortune, and the sole care of parents who possessed no other being to love. We shall not enter into the particulars of her education, as our readers may easily judge what it had been from the circumstances; and it would be useless to relate how "no expense was spared," and "no indulgence refused," to improve and render happy the idol of wealthy and doting

parents. Some meddling and talkative persons certainly asserted that her mother spoiled her by overweening fondness, and that her father ruined her temper by excess of indulgence; but we shall not question the veracity of these assertions, as at the period we introduce Lady Charlotte into our narrative, her mother was no more, and, if her father had erred, he was reaping the bitter fruits of his fault.

Certain it was that Lady Charlotte's temper was ruined, if that is the proper term to use for a temper which rendered herself, and all who had the misfortune to be near her, perfectly miserable. Tyrannical and peevish, violent and sullen, her life was a succession of these feelings, varying in each degree with every casual circumstance of existence. Highly accomplished, and not deficient in good natural talents, and possessed of every luxury that was calculated to give happiness, Lady Charlotte was for ever miserable, for ever exclaiming against her unfortunate destiny, and finding causes of complaint, and repining against all around her. Accustomed from her earliest infancy to regard nobody's feelings but her own, she had learnt to examine every selfish sensation with such keenness of perception, that she felt pain and annoyance which no other person would have felt.

The most striking trait of her disposition was

one which is perhaps less remarked than rare, namely, that her ill-humour exhibited itself in proportion as the individual present valued her feelings, or felt interest in her happiness. She did not care to frown or weep where her frowns and tears excited no sensation; and she could even be kind, amiable, and submissive, where she knew her kindness was neither valued nor required. In the company of strangers, therefore, Lady Charlotte was an agreeable companion; and it was not until she had contrived to excite a sufficient interest in any one to care for her feelings, that she exhibited her powers of annoyance.

Hers was not that common-place vulgar tyranny which domineers over those whom circumstances have placed in its temporary physical dominion. It was that mental thrall—that yoke which galls the wounded affections, and triumphs in giving pain merely to those who feel the sting more keenly, because they love the hand that inflicts it. It was not over her domestics or underlings that she wished to hold sway, but over the hearts of those whom from their affection for her she deemed subject to her will. She never frowned but when she knew that her smile could bestow gladness; and she never wept but where she knew that her happiness was anxiously wished for, and that her tears could excite an-

guish in the heart that vainly strove to remove all cause of reproach or sorrow.

From the excess of his parental affection, her father was the chief victim to this system; indeed he might be said to be the only one, for on him the phials of her wrath were constantly and ingeniously poured, in one or other of the countless modes which we have made a vain attempt to exemplify, but which all who have ever known a similar nature will easily judge and comprehend.

Lady Charlotte was not what is termed beautiful, but fine regular features, a tall elegant form, and an air of conscious dignity, at once inspired admiration in the beholder. Perhaps a judge of physiognomy might have augured a proud and vindictive spirit in her erect and lofty brow, and in the cold stern glance of her full blue eye; but her long fair tresses, the pale but alabaster fairness of her complexion, and the feminine graces of her well-trained and finely-moulded figure, must have claimed the homage due to the courtly and intellectual beauty, from all who could judge of its perfection. Although not vain, Lady Charlotte was conscious of her attractions, and proudly indignant at any rivalry on the part of another; and if her secret feelings were questioned,—though she scarcely ventured to own them to herself, it would perhaps

appear that her ill-humour on this first interview with her intended companion was not lessened by a comparison of her own charms with those of the latter. Be that as it may, Lady Charlotte was too high bred to let it appear, and Alice never once suspected it. How matters went on on further acquaintance, we must reserve for our next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

"DEAR me! I wonder you are not tired to death of sitting here all day in such mild weather," said Lady Charlotte, yawning, as she had stood listlessly at the window, watching the varying clouds of the sky, in hopes that the day, which was very rainy, would clear up to let her take a drive; which she would not have expressed a wish for if it had been fine. Alice was busied finishing a sketch, which she had taken the day before. She laid down her pencil and paused, while Lady Charlotte leant upon her chair, and examined the drawing.

"Very pretty—very exact, too; but I wonder what interest you can feel in drawing the likeness of an old church that you can see every day from your bed-room window. I am sure I could never be at the trouble. I used to sketch from nature, as they call it, first, when I began to learn; and they told me I had a taste for it; but papa bored me to death about it, so I gave it up. I hate to be *followed up* in any pursuit, and he has such a way of boring one about all they do, though I dare say he doesn't intend it,

as he fancies it is taking an interest in them. I'm sure I should practise a great deal more, if he did not constantly tease me to play, and talk about the songs and pieces I play best. I hate to be teased by people's remarks. I wonder you have patience to hear his continual criticisms on your drawings."

"I am much obliged by the trouble he so kindly takes," replied Alice; "and I'm happy when any one shows an interest in what I do."

"Ay, but no wonder, you *do* such strange things; I'm sure I needn't wonder at anything, when you sit for two whole hours working with a pencil at a little piece of paper, not six inches square. There is no accounting for tastes."

"All things are comparative," replied Alice, smiling good-humouredly. "I dare say there are employments which I might prefer if they were within my reach; but as they are not at present, I prefer working at this piece of paper, to watching the clouds and wishing for fine weather."

"Ay, perhaps so; so would I if I had not just set my mind to have a drive; and when I have made up my mind for *one* plan, I cannot change and care for anything else. Is it not provoking that it should rain the very day that I had resolved on going out?"

"Very provoking, I admit; but are you sure

that the rain is not the cause of your unusual anxiety to go out, since you are not in general so much bent upon it. I think we are sometimes apt to wish for a thing merely because we cannot get it."

"Perhaps *you* are, but I am not. I did not wish, nor even care about going out all last week, when the weather was so very beautiful; therefore it is very unlikely that I should wish, from mere whim, to go out in a day like this."

Alice thought it was *very likely*, but she did not express that opinion; and a short silence again ensued, during which she resumed her pencil, and Lady Charlotte proceeded to arrange her curls before the mirror.

"Only think of that stupid man, Dr. Varley, mistaking you for younger than me," said she, at length. "I am sure nobody else would ever make such a mistake; and you say you are a year older. Well, no wonder, for the idiot is so short-sighted he can't possibly judge."

"I think you were very unkind to insist on his guessing under these circumstances," said Alice, laughing; "the poor man did not seem to put much faith in his own judgment either, for he seemed very unwilling to decide."

"He's a stupid fool. I wonder papa has the patience to endure him; but one must just take what one can get, in an out-of-the-world place

like this—all I most wonder at is, how he can endure living here at all."

"But I thought you said you were tired of London, before you left it."

"So I was, for a time; but I never contemplated leaving it for ever; and we have been here ever since last autumn, and there seems no chance of our ever going back again. I am sure it is all nonsense about this place being better for his health. Those who are ill in one place, won't be much better in another, and I am sure he had an example of that in poor dear mamma, for she was dragged to all parts of the world, and died after all. But I always thought her death was caused by fretting, she brought on illness by her constant discontent and unhappiness. To be sure she had cause, but one must submit to fate. I see no good in always repining, and making one's self and every one else miserable."

"Not even about the weather," said Alice, smiling archly.

Lady Charlotte tossed her head and looked proudly indignant; but Alice frequently made such remarks, therefore she did not express any anger. Indeed, she was in the habit of listening calmly to advice, or even *reason*, on the part of Alice, which she would have rejected with disdain from any other person, who did not express

their opinions with the same frank and sincere plainness.

"How I wish I had dark hair!" exclaimed Lady Charlotte, in a peevish tone, as she looked with a dissatisfied glance at her own face in the glass, and then at Alice's. "Every one praises your hair; but what a deal of time and trouble it must take you to dress it in that manner! I wish I could dress mine so, but I never could have patience."

"Let me dress it for you. I will gladly take patience, and you will find it will not take any such length of time as you fancy."

"Oh no, thank you. I could not think of giving you the trouble. Besides, I never would consent to oil *my* hair; it makes it glossy for the time, but everybody says it breaks and spoils it."

"But I never use oil; and your hair is much more glossy than mine. Do let me dress it for you—just now," said Alice, laying down her pencil and getting up. "I'll do it in a few minutes' time."

"O, dear no! I entreat you. Excuse me. I'd much rather not. Your hair is very beautiful, I have no doubt—but I prefer my own style—I am used to it, and if you will pardon me, I'd rather not change it."

Alice felt her cheek crimson at this rude

repulse, but she checked a momentary impulse to reply, and calmly resumed her employment. Lady Charlotte seemed a little confused; for she hemmed and coloured slightly, as, rising, she commenced turning over the leaves of a pile of new music, which lay on a side table.

"Have you seen that?" said she, breaking silence by approaching the table where Alice sat, and handing, with unwonted politeness, a new copy of elegantly bound melodies, set to music. Alice took the volume, and replied to her further remarks, politely, but coolly. This was quite sufficient, however; Lady Charlotte, when she saw no chance of her insult being repelled, felt no uneasiness as to the feeling it might have inspired; and she resumed her conversation on indifferent topics, in the same strain as before. The weather, meanwhile, cleared up, but unfortunately the sun shone out at the very hour when the Earl, awakening from a broken slumber, which he generally sought in vain, was wheeled into the room where Alice and her ladyship sat, to *bore* the latter, in the hope of obtaining a respite from his own weary thoughts, by her conversation and kindness. The first of these Lady Charlotte had no notion of indulging any one with, unless she felt just in the humour; and the latter she never felt, and consequently never showed towards her

afflicted parent If kindness was in her nature, caprice and ill-temper had rendered it wholly out of her power to exert it. Besides, as she knew that the Earl wished for her company, she anxiously wished to go out, and took care to give such unequivocal testimony of her inclinations, as soon called forth an earnest entreaty on his part that she would go.

" Go, dear Charlotte. It makes me so happy when I think you are enjoying yourself. Go, and make haste back, and amuse me with all you see and hear."

" Which will be vastly little. I should like to know what I shall either see or hear in a drive of two miles circuit round an enclosed park, on a road that no human being ever walks? and if I am to make haste back, I see little use there is in my going. Besides, I would not for the world leave you by yourself, with no one to amuse you. You know how often you have told me that you dreaded being alone. If Miss Russel——but, of course, I cannot think of depriving her of an airing. I had better remain in-doors. It is not of much consequence, seeing that I have been at home this week past."

" But I dare say Miss Russel will not refuse to stay with me; indeed, I am sure she will not. She likes to talk to me; and if we tire of each other's conversation, she will not object to finish

that book we began last night. I know she is interested in it, and will read aloud with pleasure."

Lady Charlotte gave an appealing glance to Alice; for, although she did not doubt of obtaining a ready consent, she felt it necessary to appear as if she did so. Even though the inclinations of Alice had been against it, her natural good feeling would have caused her to give a ready consent to resign any of her own pleasures, if by so doing she could while away a weary hour, or soothe a single pang of the tortured sufferer.

Three months had now elapsed since her first arrival at Dartmore Lodge, and during that time she had become completely incorporated in the small circle. The Earl and his daughter, though from different motives, both agreed in their good will to admit such a valuable acquisition to their otherwise dull society; and Alice, although she did not at all times find her situation so pleasant as she would have wished, preferred remaining where she was to changing, perhaps for the worse. Though this reasoning might have had a great effect, we would not have it thought that her stay was prompted solely by interested motives. We all know, that even in the least affectionate dispositions, there exists an innate attachment which insensibly

springs up on lengthened association, and which, however disagreeable the individuals who excite it, never fails to link us to their society.

To Lady Charlotte, Alice was indeed a valuable companion—one on whom she could vent her spleen, without any fear of after consequences. Naturally of a mild and passive nature, Alice felt no desire to repel attacks which (as she saw plainly were the result of a bad temper, not of premeditated insult) had very little, if any, effect on disturbing her good-humour. Besides, in Alice her ladyship found an excellent subterfuge from all stray exertion, pains, or duties, which she must otherwise have thought it necessary to perform. Alice could play on the harp, piano, &c., with a proficiency equal to her own, and therefore when the Earl sought music, Alice was deputied to take the trouble of affording it to him. Alice could write letters, without the aid of dictation, on any subject that the Earl gave a clue to, therefore all the necessary letters concerning private business were written by her. Alice read with fluency and animation, therefore it was her task to read to the Earl, while Lady Charlotte, glad to get rid of the trouble, yawned and listened on a sofa beside them.

There was no reason for her being thus selected to perform these tasks, except her willingness to do whatever was in her power to

oblige others; and, as is too frequently the fate of those who have that yielding nature, her feelings were seldom consulted. Alice could play; she never refused; therefore it could not be presumed that she had ever any objections—Alice could write; she had never said that writing dull business letters was tiresome, therefore she had no dislike to them—Alice could read at any time, for she never refused to resign any other employment to do so; and, though her voice was at times hoarse and faltering, she could not be tired, because she never said so—in short, Alice could do everything that she was asked, because she was willing to do so. No wonder that one of Lady Charlotte's disposition, who was in the habit of expressing every feeling of annoyance, however slight, should doubt the existence of feelings in one who never expressed any.

With the Earl, however, Alice was regarded in a very different light. He had mingled amid the crowded scenes of life; he had undergone many changes and feelings in his own person, and he could judge the human character by deeper tests than mere outward expressions. At first he had regarded Alice with but little attention. As a young girl, the companion of his daughter, scarcely entered on the verge of womanhood, she could excite but little interest

in the mind of an old man, whose faculties, bodily and mental, were cruelly absorbed by an agonizing malady that was fast hastening him to the grave. But daily intercourse, and the constant occurrence of circumstances which tended to display her character, contrasted with that of his selfish and stormy-passioned daughter, soon attracted his attention to those virtues which could not fail to command his esteem, and in time won his affection. Yes, his affection! for that term may be used, without fear of exciting a smile even in the most eager scoffer, when we learn the causes which won and kept up that affection.

The cruel disease which afflicted the Earl of Dartmore is too well known to require description. A deeply-rooted, spreading cancer on his left side, rendered him almost totally helpless; and at times caused such paroxysms of agony as to deprive him of his senses while they lasted. These fits were of frequent occurrence, and it would be impossible to describe them. The writhings of helpless agony, when every distortion of the frame occasioned an increase of the torture which convulsed it—the shriek of delirium, and the more fearful imprecations of the frantic sufferer as he implored Heaven to put an end to his anguish—at these times he had to be carefully watched, lest in his despair, if an

opportunity had occurred, he should be tempted to put a period to his existence.

This task must have devolved on hired menials (for his shuddering daughter fled from a scene which hurt, and even disgusted her *finer* feelings), had not Alice stood by the couch of pain. With prompt and unflinching care, she ministered every possible alleviation; and, with the voice of disinterested pity, soothed the otherwise neglected sufferer. On the first occasion her presence was accidental, but her exertions and kind attention had so mitigated the sufferings of the Earl, that he implored her to remain with him on the future recurrence of his paroxysms of agony.

"Oh, if you knew what an effect the voice of kindness has in soothing even my delirium, you would not refuse me," he would say. "It is long, long since I heard it; and when the hands of menials hold me down on my couch, their firmest grasp does not more effectually restrain my frame, than does one soothing word allay the frenzy of my mind."

Could Alice have refused that appeal, none would have envied her task. His daughter did not—worlds would not have tempted her to share it.

"Good Heavens! I wonder at your strength of mind," said she, one day, as Alice, pale and

exhausted, had just quitted her task in the sick chamber; "for my part, I'd die rather than endure it for a moment. His cries, and the contortions he makes, are really frightful,—and then the *smell*. Faugh! the very idea turns me sick. I protest you must have the nerves of a horse to stand it."

Alice was too much shocked at this speech to care for the insult which applied to herself; but if her *nerves* had been shaken by the fearful scene she had just quitted, this attack had the effect of bracing them, as common humanity determined her not to flinch from a task which she saw was fast hastening to a close.

"Poor Charlotte!" said the Earl, as he raised himself, with much difficulty, to look from the window, that he might catch a glimpse of his haughty daughter, as she was whirled down the winding sweep in her open barouche. "Poor Charlotte! she looks happy. I hope she is so; though I fear it will not last long. Her disposition is not calculated to ensure any duration of pleasure. I fear, Miss Russel, you find us very strange companions, and begin to weary of our tempers?"

Alice smiled. "I believe we must all bear with each other," replied she; "otherwise what is called *social* existence would be very limited."

"Some are better calculated to endure the

frailties of their neighbours than others. You, of all persons I ever met (and I have met many in my days), are the most lenient in that instance; but it is possible to tire the most patient sufferer, as I well know, and I fear we have too severely put your endurance to the test. But I spare you any avowal to the contrary, as I know you will deny it, and I have no intention of offering amendment. On the contrary, I would solicit your forbearance for a longer time. It will not be long on my part, for I feel I am dying, but for Charlotte's sake. I know you cannot love her; but I would fain secure your friendship for her, when I am no more. She is wealthy. She will need no worldly aid; but she will have much difficulty in gaining a true friend; such a friend as you would be, if you would promise to take an interest in her fate."

"Alas! I fear my friendship could avail her nothing; friendless myself, I could prove of no use to another, who——"

"Of every use that she requires. She needs no protection. Her rank and wealth will ensure that; but what an inestimable treasure is a true friend! Hers is a temper ill-calculated to secure one. Flatterers and sycophants she will find plenty; but one who will tell her the faults she commits; advise her with disinterested motives, and soothe her with sincere kindness, such a

friend I know you would be to one you loved. But Charlotte, alas! is not likely to prove that one. Yet, for my sake, *I* will take care to place you above want or dependence, if you will promise not wholly to desert her."

"Did my feelings enable me to profess any unusual affection for Lady Charlotte," replied Alice, somewhat proudly, "I should not hesitate to avow them, without any hope of reward; as it is, I should not remain an instant longer under her roof, if I were not prepared to be her friend, under any circumstances that may be in my power here or hereafter."

"Nay, I have offended. Let us change the conversation. I believe you. It was but to satisfy my own pleased conviction of the truth that I asked the question; and perhaps with an overweening anxiety for poor Charlotte. She will soon need your consolation; for in spite of all her little faults of temper, I believe she loves her father well enough to feel bitterly his loss. Yes, I know she will weep for me; and I would fain believe she will not refuse to stand beside me in the last struggle, though her heart is too tender to witness my agonies now. I am a foolish doting father; and I dare say you smile at my weakness; but there was a time when I should have smiled too, had any one prophesied that I was to end my days dependent on the

compassion of a gentle girl, and a mean suppliant for a little pity from my only child." Here the Earl's brow darkened, and an expression, never before noticed by Alice, convulsed his stern features as he proceeded. "Yes, there was a time when I little dreamt, that the proud, the gay happy being, could become the sickening loathsome mass of mortality which I now find myself. You would not wonder that I seek to divert myself with even the most trivial of passing events, rather than suffer a moment's mental relaxation, to compare the past with the present state of my life. I am a weak wretch; dependent on the humblest menial, whose idle prattle can divert my thoughts from what would drive me to madness. But it will soon be over. The spirit, which once aspired to a better fate, will soon escape from its corrupted and loathsome prison, and the anguish of *earthly* sufferings."

At this part of the speech the countenance of the Earl was convulsed with emotion, at once fearful, and almost unearthly. His eye flashed, and his lip quivered, while a ghastly whiteness betokened some unusual agitation. He looked like one whose soul was tortured by the anticipation of *sufferings* beyond the grave. A pause ensued—till he again broke silence in his usual tone.

"It is a lovely evening," said he, as the

beams of the afternoon sun of August threw their rays on his couch ; " but many a year has elapsed since I felt pleasure in the charms of earthly sunshine. It was on such a day as this, ten years ago, that I stood by in powerless despair and saw my first-born, my darling son, then in the full health of boyhood, thrown from his horse, and his scull dashed to pieces on the ground, at my feet. I felt his death bitterly. It would be useless to talk of my feelings now ; had he lived, on this day he would have heired my fortune; and I sometimes think, I should have found in him that affection which seems denied me in this world now. It was on a day like this, the year following that catastrophe. that a malignant pestilence stretched four darling infants in death before me; and it was on such a day—but what boots all this now ? I am hastening where earthly woes are no more, and even guilt is atoned for. But you must not wonder that I do not feel happy even in the sunshine which gladdens every other heart. You are young. Long, long, may you rejoice in the sunshine of existence. You have other ties—dear affections, and doubtless will soon forget your brief sojourn with the tortured wretch who now addresses you. No; I do not believe you will forget me. You have promised to be a friend to Charlotte, and you will pray for me—

I know you will, and your prayers will plead for that mercy, which my sinful agony forbids me to seek."

Here the Earl extended his wasted hand towards Alice, who trembled with a feeling of awe as she felt the cold clammy pressure of his withered fingers.

"Have you a father living?" said he, after a pause, in a hollow and broken voice.

"I have no father. I never knew one," replied Alice, with much emotion.

"I would be as a father to you while I live; but I have none of the feelings of earthly affection to bestow. I never was happy even in the love I bore my own offspring; the mark of Heaven's wrath fell upon them, and my heart seemed withered by the same blight. I will be a friend to you; for you are the only being who does not shrink from my loathsome carcass. Yes, I can see the look of disgust; I can mark the ill-suppressed nausea with which even my pampered menials turn away from my disabled and revolting carcass. You have not shown that horror. If you feel it, you have kept it concealed from me, and I cannot express the gratitude which *I* have felt in return. Your task will soon be over; and I know that to a heart like yours, it will be an ample reward, to think that your exertions have soothed the last agonies of a wretch

who had no other being to soothe him. Yet I am not sufficiently grateful to you; for alas! such is the perverse sway of nature, that for one fond look from Charlotte, I would resign your kindest attention—did she but show one half of your compassion; but this is folly! it is a poor way of returning thanks. When I asked you if you had a father, I wished and hoped that there existed one who could love you as I love my ungrateful child. None but a father can love a child; and to such a child how deep must be the devotion!"

The Earl paused and sighed. Alice's tears flowed fast, and she sobbed aloud. These remarks had touched a painful chord in her feelings, by awakening the sense of her friendless and nameless birth,—the bitter yearnings of the heart, with which she pined to learn her mysterious origin, and the blush of shame which often tinged her cheek, as she trembled with suspicions that she was doomed never to satisfy.

"I know not how it is," resumed the Earl after a brief silence, "that one who has braved death fearlessly in the field of battle, and on the stormy ocean, indeed in every shape that it is most calculated to daunt man's heart, should feel thus timid at the thoughts of his approaching end, on a quiet death-bed. Yet I have braved all these terrors, and I feel that my courage fails me, and

my heart sinks when I look forward to the prospect of dying under my present circumstances. I scorn my own weakness, but I cannot conquer it, else I should not thus display my coward timidity to one whose gentle sex can afford no aid, and whose heart, bold in innocence, will despise me for fearing death. Ay, but what is *after* death? that is the startling thought. Yet it is not that I shrink from; it is the fearful anticipation of the last moments,—the last agonies, which I know will be long and loathsome. It is the thoughts of dying with no kindred hand to smooth my pillow;—no kindred heart to feel for my sufferings, or care when I have ceased to suffer; with none to stand near my couch, save hirelings, who curse the groans that break on their slumbers, during the bribed and unwilling watches of the night; and eagerly look forward to the moment when the spirit shall forsake the hated clay, that they may be permitted to rifle the gewgaws and trappings which can no longer be claimed by a senseless corpse. You shudder! I do not wish to shock your feelings. I would only fain endeavour to claim your pity. Ever since you showed compassion on my agony, I have clung to you as a drowning wretch catches at the frailest plank that offers itself between him and eternity. Will you grant my prayer? will you promise not to desert me? I know Char-

lotte will fly from the scene. I know she will not stay to behold my last agonies; but will *you* stand by me, that I may look on one kind face, and hear one unpurchased blessing, when my soul departs to that eternity which the purest shudder to contemplate? Say, will you promise?"

"I will," exclaimed Alice, with much emotion; "but Heaven forbid that you should require *my* aid at such a moment. Your daughter loves you too well; surely——"

"Say no more, enough that you have pledged yourself to my entreaty. If your task be shared, it will be the easier performed; but no more. Yonder comes Lady Charlotte. I would not mention the subject to her. Let her be happy, for it would disturb her peace; but, remember your promise. You will abide by it."

"I will," repeated Alice, in a faltering voice, but unhesitating determination, and a feeling of unwonted awe at this extraordinary engagement checked her further utterance, until Lady Charlotte entered the room.

An unusual glow of colour and expression of good-humour, which were visible on her ladyship's countenance, indicated some cause of satisfaction, which she hastened to relate.

"Only think, papa," was her first exclamation, as she seated herself at the foot of the sofa

where he lay, "only think how fortunate; Lord and Lady Conway are arrived at Matlock, with a host of fashionables in their train; and they are making up a green-room among themselves at the new theatre, where they are to act 'The Gamester;' and Lady Frances insists on my being Mrs. Beverley, as she says I should be such an excellent character for that; and I have agreed to attend the rehearsal to-morrow at eleven o'clock precisely, if you have not any objections; have you?"

A frown, which was visible on the Earl's brow at the first commencement of this speech, betrayed a secret objection, but he replied mildly:—

"Since you seem to feel so much pleasure in the idea, I should be sorry to interfere with your enjoyments; although I fear the fatigue and late hours may affect your health; and——"

"And you do not wish it, of course. I knew that would be the case. It is always so when I wish for anything; besides, *late hours* have nothing to do with the matter; for the rehearsals always take place in the forenoon, and the performance, which will be only once, will be over before twelve o'clock at night. But I know the real cause of your objections. You have a spite at Lady Conway, and Heaven knows for why, except that she has always shown great affection

for me, and you wish me to be buried alive in your sick chamber; but no matter. It does not signify; I'll give it up. That's easily done. I've given up many things for as little reason. Of course, as a daughter, obedience and submission are my duty; and as a father, you are perfectly justified in exacting both."

"My dear child, you mistake me. I have no wish to prevent you from acting as you please, not even from *acting* in the Gamester; although if I were to express my candid opinion, I should say there are many other amusements more becoming for a young lady of education, than aping a strolling player. As to Lady Conway, I have so often expressed my opinion of her character, that I think it useless to comment any further; but I would not have you think that I am *exacting* any submission. I only give my opinion, but leave the decision to yourself."

It was seldom the Earl spoke so determinedly when he opposed his daughter; and the latter seemed at first astonished, for she was silent for a few minutes; but soon recovering herself, she coloured proudly, and replied with all due indignation.

"Then since it is so, I beg leave to take my own *decision*, as you term it. I consider myself perfectly competent to judge the propriety of those whom I choose for my associates, inde-

pendent of the whims of absurdity, or the prejudices of a diseased imagination."

"Do as you please, Charlotte. I repeat I have no wish to command you; but I plainly tell you, that it is against my most earnest wishes, if you again renew your intimacy with Lady Conway. You know my reasons, therefore I need not explain."

A scowl of fury contracted the brow of Lady Charlotte.

"Indeed," replied she, in a voice almost inarticulate with passion, "I care very little what are your reasons, I know enough of them; and as to your wishes, so long as they are not put into execution by violence, I hold them equally contemptible. Thank Heaven, I have done with tyranny. The rest of your children have escaped from your thraldom by death; but I trust to outlive even your power."

A bitter smile quivered on the pallid lip of the father, as he turned to reply with mildness to this unnatural declaration of his child,—when at that moment, a sudden pang convulsed his features. His eyes fixed, and seemed ready to start from their sockets. At length a piercing cry broke from his lips, and he fell back in strong convulsions.

CHAPTER X.

Even to those accustomed to witness the frequent recurrence of these paroxysms, this last attack of the Earl's malady seemed to threaten a final termination to his sufferings; but these were destined to be prolonged for many recurrences of as bitter agony. For many days after this attack he remained perfectly insensible, at times raving in the height of delirium; but the pain at length abated, and he was restored to the consciousness of a wretched existence, more than ever disabled, weak, and helpless.

And where was Lady Charlotte? Did she watch by the couch of her suffering parent? Did she sympathize in the agonies of him to whom her last words had been those of insult and anger? No! It is true that, on the first alarm of his attack, she shrieked, fainted, and was carried out of the room; but she soon recovered from the shock, which, though it had startled her nerves, had not struck a chord of her better nature, if indeed such existed within her. The following day was appointed for the rehearsal, and she did not fail to attend it;

though, even in his remote and darkened chamber, she could hear the agonizing groans of her father. Day after day she sought the assemblage of her fashionable friends, where animated by their applause she exerted herself to display the feelings of devoted affection and self-sacrificing virtue, while every real claim on her own heart was disregarded, every tie of love or duty neglected and forgotten. Yes, forgotten; for we question whether, amid the excitement of the drama and the eager hope of praise, Lady Charlotte ever once thought of her deserted and wretched parent. Even when she returned home, if any thoughts of his sufferings intruded on her pleasant reflections of the morning's amusement or her projected plans of to-morrow, she took every pains instantly to shut them out from her mind; as seated in her apartment, remote from the sick chamber, she listened to the flattery of her waiting-maid, and studied the most becoming costume for her projected appearance before her aristocratic audience.

Under these circumstances, could Alice refuse to perform her promise to the unhappy and suffering Earl? And had she been inclined to do so, the earnest and constant supplications of the poor patient, during every moment of consciousness, must certainly have claimed her pity. Even during his delirium he would not suffer

Alice to quit his sight for an instant, without giving way to the bitterest lamentations; and after he recovered perfect consciousness, he implored her not to desert him, with an earnestness which forbade all denial. Compassion must have been touched in a harder heart than Alice's, whose gentle soothing voice whispered comfort to his anguish, as, pale but untiring, she shared the midnight watches of the hired attendants, while the daughter of the sufferer reposed on her downy couch or mingled in the festive scene of fashion and gaiety.

At length the time arrived when Lady Charlotte was to reap the fruit of her labours; namely, to appear before full assembly in her new-acquired character—Mrs. Beverley. The Earl was much better, therefore she visited him for a short time that morning; but she had no leisure to talk with him. She was too much occupied by her arrangements for the evening, and Alice was summoned several times to decide the comparative merits of brocades, laces, &c., which were destined to form part of her decorations for the night. At seven o'clock she set off in her carriage, attended by her own woman, who was to remain with her in the green-room until all was over.

This evening passed much the same as usual with Alice. The Earl, who was sufficiently

recovered to leave his bed, lay on a couch in the room, while Alice amused him by reading such books as she fancied would beguile the hours. A late visit from the physician alone disturbed the monotony ; and at ten o'clock the Earl was removed to bed, where he fell into a slumber which most unexpectedly continued for many hours unbroken.

Alice, who according to custom had retired to an antechamber, which she had occupied since the late illness of the Rarl, took this opportunity of beginning a long letter to her mother, to whom she had not written for a longer period than usual. Thus occupied the time passed almost unheeded ; for when she concluded she found to her surprise that it was twelve o'clock. The Earl still continued to sleep, and Lady Charlotte was not yet returned. She was usually punctual; but something might have detained her. She had a considerable distance to come, and might not arrive for some time. Notwithstanding these reasons, Alice sat listening for the sound of her carriage-wheels, with that mixture of anxiety and impatience with which, when our minds are unoccupied by any other thought, we look for the arrival of any event which we know must necessarily happen. Another hour passed away, but no appearance of her ladyship. Alice began to feel somewhat

uneasy, both on her account and that of the Earl, who on awakening would be much alarmed at her prolonged absence. Alice had promised to sit up for her return; but, though she had not, it would have been impossible to have slept; for she felt too anxious on her account. Hour after hour passed away, daylight broke, and still she did not return. Uneasiness now increased to alarm. Alice was at a loss what to do. She debated in her own mind as to the propriety of despatching a messenger to make inquiries; but a doubt as to her right of questioning the motions of Lady Charlotte restrained her from acting on her own authority. At length the Earl awoke, and she was summoned to his apartment. It was now past eight o'clock in the morning. His unusually prolonged sleep had restored the Earl, and she found him already removed to his sofa. On entering, Alice was struck by the unwonted animation of his look and tone; but she was taken by surprise by his first question—

"How is Charlotte? When did she return last night?"

Alice was unprepared for that sudden demand. She hesitated, faltered, and felt totally *nonplussed* for an answer. At that moment a servant entered the room with a letter, which he placed in the hand of the Earl, who, hastily

breaking the seal, glanced at its contents, and dashing it on the ground, rang the bell with a violence which shattered the cord.

"Order the carriage and horses instantly," said he to the attendant who appeared.

"Instantly. But, my lord, a person below wishes to speak to your lordship. He says he has business of importance to communicate."

"Show him up!"

Here the Earl sank back exhausted by his exertions, but pointed to the letter which lay on the ground, and signified to Alice to take it up.

"Read it—read it!" exclaimed he, in a broken voice.

Alice obeyed. It contained only the following words:—

"To my Father, the Earl of Dartmore.

"It is useless to follow me. Before this reaches you, I shall be beyond all possibility of discovery. It must depend on circumstances whether we ever meet again.

"Charlotte."

Before Alice had time to form any conjecture on this extraordinary news, the entrance of the person before announced interrupted her. He was a stranger, and by his dress and manner seemed to belong to a respectable though humble

rank. He bowed low and immediately commenced to state that he was a tradesman in the village, and considered it his duty to inform the Earl that he had seen Lady Charlotte Astley, whom he knew by sight, at an early hour that morning, in a post-chaise with two suspicious-looking men, driving at a rapid rate towards the London road. Being himself mounted on a horse, on his way to a neighbouring market, he had the curiosity to follow them for a considerable distance, and, notwithstanding their rapid speed, had traced them as far as the turnpike public-house, where they stopped to give breath to the horses; and he then heard one of the persons inside give orders to the postilions to drive with all speed for London. After giving this information, for which he refused any reward, the man withdrew.

"To London then is my destination," exclaimed the Earl, who had listened to the details with a calmness which he still maintained, and which was unnaturally constrasted with his quivering lip and the ghastly paleness of his countenance.

"To London? Impossible! You would not surely undertake such a journey. It would be death to you, and I fear it is too late to avail any purpose."

"Do not attempt to dissuade me. What is

life compared to this? Where is my child? I must seek her; and if I fail, I have no wish but to die! Thank God, this man's information has removed a more fearful suspicion. To London, said he? What can she seek there? Merciful Heaven! Some wretch has betrayed her; advised, nay, perhaps forced her to take this step. But who? Where? or for what purpose? Go—fly—order them to get ready, that I may follow. And you—you must not desert me. No, no, you shall not."

"My lord, I must beg leave to refuse this task. I fear it is not in my power to aid your pursuit. I may retard it, and my interference may deter Lady Charlotte from discovering her retreat to you. Permit me to—"

"I will not, must not, listen to you. You shall not leave me, if prayers, entreaties avail not, I *command* you in the name of all you hold sacred not to desert me. A day, perhaps an hour, will decide my fate, for life or death. Would you, after enduring so much, abandon your task at the last? I call upon you by your promise. Have you so soon forgotten it—come with me. All is now fast approaching to a close. Aid me in this last effort. If I fail in regaining my child, I die, and you will be freed from your thraldom."

Alice paused, for she scarcely knew how to

reply. She would have refused had time been granted for consideration, but not a moment was left even to hesitate. The carriage was now announced. The Earl was lifted, by his own desire, into it by his attendants; and almost mechanically Alice followed, and entering it, seated herself by his side, and the postilions drove off at full speed. Here we must now resign her to fate; but it may be as well to state, that as far as the journey went, their pursuit was unattended with success. A clue, however, was obtained to the fugitives, whom they traced to London; whither they arrived in safety. It was on the event of their arrival that Walter beheld Alice, who, wearied, confused, and almost dizzy by her rapid journey, was wholly unconscious of the regards of him, whose image was seldom absent from her thoughts.

CHAPTER XI.

The early twilight of an evening in the beginning of November had begun to darken the busy streets of London. The day had been cold and rainy, but towards evening there was a rawness in the atmosphere which betokened approaching frost, a change which was keenly felt through the attenuated frame of a solitary invalid, who, weak in scarcely-established convalescence, shrank from the chilly air, that seemed to penetrate every pore of his wasted form.

It is Walter Deverell; but so changed!—so unlike what he once was, that we can scarcely believe it is he. Who could trace in that shrunken and emaciated frame, that pallid cheek, hollow and lustreless eye, the once stately figure, the lofty bearing and manly grace of Walter Deverell? Yet it is he; and the heart which beats in that altered breast, is still animated by all the better feelings—all the virtue and honour that were wont to elevate it in happier days. But sickness and sorrow leave sad traces on the outward being, and Walter has suffered

both, in their keenest extent, since we last beheld him.

For three weeks after that night we last described, a violent fever laid him prostrate both in mind and body; and long after consciousness returned, he continued to linger on the utmost verge of eternity; and, even now, though more than two months have elapsed since his attack, his convalescence wears an aspect too much resembling a prolonged though weakened degree of the distemper.

On the evening on which we now introduce him, he was even more than usually depressed, both in mental and bodily feelings. The dreary and unoccupied hours, no longer absorbed by active pain, were now employed in sadder reflections on the past, on his present situation, and the blank prospect of the future. As our readers will naturally be curious to learn the means by which our hero (whose resources were exhausted before the commencement of his illness) was maintained during its continuance, we relate the facts, although he himself had failed to obtain the minute details of the secret.

Perhaps the reader may remember Lewis Barnard, who, though he has hitherto occupied an insignificant place in this narrative, is by no means the least worthy of regard. It will perhaps be recollected that that youth displayed a

taste for drawing, and Walter, in his days of prosperity, had spared no expense to cultivate it. His kindness was amply repaid, as it proved, in this hour of want and sickness, the sole means of support, and rescuing him from want and death.

Immediately on the event of his illness, Lewis discovered the real state of his benefactor's finances, upon which discovery, he lost no time in using his prompt exertions to avert the threatened penury, and minister to the wants of the now helpless sufferer. During his leisure days of plenty, he had, as before stated, taken pains to perfect himself in the art; and having by him a number of finely finished specimens of his labours, he hastened to offer them for sale. By a fortunate chance, at the very first application, they attracted the attention of an amateur, who happened to be present in the shop where poor Lewis, alone and unrecommended, first tried his fate; the designs and execution pleased the amateur, a gentleman of fortune, whose favourite pursuit was the works of art. Much to the astonishment of the enraptured Lewis, he purchased his whole stock of paintings at a price far beyond his highest expectations; and promised to pay him in a similar manner for an equal number, which he commissioned him to produce, on subjects

which he dictated. The sum received was a fortune under the young artist's present circumstances, as it was not only sufficient to rescue them from impending want, but amply obtained the comforts requisite for Walter, who received them, utterly unconscious of the bestower or the means by which all was bestowed. Delighted at being enabled to discharge a debt of gratitude, which was the dearest and most valued idea to the friendless Lewis, he continued to labour hard and indefatigably that he might continue to support his beloved friend. After Walter was sufficiently recovered to observe any thing, he soon discovered the truth, although Lewis strove to avoid letting him know the secret. Unwilling to wound the feelings of the kind-hearted youth, Walter forbore questioning him too closely, or making any comment on the subject; but he felt the full extent of the benefit, even more deeply than he was capable of expressing. Unfortunately for his own peace of mind, he felt that sense of obligation, that aversion of mind which a proud spirit naturally feels at dependence, and his nature recoiled within him at the idea of being a burden on the exertions of another. As he cautiously avoided any discovery of this secret annoyance, it preyed the heavier on his spirits, and retarded his recovery, which was slow and doubtful.

The keen discernment of Lewis soon guessed the cause, and it would be impossible to describe the bitterness of feeling with which he beheld the secret reluctance of his beloved benefactor to accept the kindness which it was his sole pleasure to bestow. He would have remonstrated, but he feared that so doing would only increase the feeling; and he beheld, with silent grief, the secret repining of his friend, whose aversion to receive the benefits bestowed on him rendered every effort to soothe and restore him the means of increasing his sufferings.

Such was the state of affairs with Walter at the time we have now introduced him.

The day preceding this evening had been a particularly melancholy one, it belonged to memory. When the mind is disposed to gloomy ideas, there will be found ample reasons for indulging them. Dates, associations, and comparisons are raked up from the stores of oblivion, to show cause and prove clearly to the mind of the person so disposed that the fates have allotted that very day all its most trifling attendant circumstances as a day of misery.

Such was the case with Walter, although here was no good reason in the calendar of fate why the 11th of November should wear a more gloomy aspect to his mind than any other preceding or following it; yet certainly it did so,

and he collected many reasons that amply satisfied his own mind as to the cause.

It was on the 11th of November, three years before, that he first met Charles Travers. The date was impressed on his memory because they had often referred to it during the brief but happy portion of their association. Yes it was happy! and the fearful termination rendered its memory the more clear, and all that served to recall any recollection of his wretched friend was sufficient to give rise to a train of gloomy ideas. That was one reason for the depression of his spirits, but there were many others. In proportion as his bodily strength returned, Walter's mind became harassed by the contemplation of his situation, and a thousand various plans distracted his invention as to his future proceedings.

Of course, his illness had deprived him of the post he had expected. The vessel, which had sailed at the appointed time, could not be expected back for many months; and before he could obtain a similar appointment, he must necessarily undergo all the exertion which had attended his former application, but probably without that success which had been the result of a fortunate chance. This reflection chilled every hope in his breast, and it is not to be wondered that his spirits sunk in correspondent despondency. He rose from his seat, and

paced slowly and silently through the apartment. Lewis was seated at a table near the window, where he had been busy, till the departing light baffled his exertions, with his drawings, of which several lay finished ready for sale to-morrow. Seeing the mood of his friend, he forbore intruding on his thoughts by any remarks; and when darkness put a stop to his labours, he remained in silence, with his head resting on his hand and leaning on the table.

After pacing the floor for some time, as if absorbed in deep thought, Walter paused and stood behind the chair where Lewis was sitting. "You have been very busy to-day," said he in a kind tone, and, at the same time, taking up the drawing which was yet unfinished, he bestowed some praise on the execution which, though slight, gave more pleasure to the young artist than the highest encomiums from any other could have given.

"You work hard, Lewis, and all for my sake. I dare say you think I am very ungrateful, but I do not undervalue your kindness; I could not, since you are my only friend. But this must not be. I am well now, and do not intend to continue always a burden on your goodness. I have been thinking of a plan, which will perhaps enable me to do some thing, at least I shall try. I will return to Paris. I have not

many friends there, but those who knew me used to flatter me by proofs of their esteem. I have at least done nothing that I need blush for; and I think, if I were to solicit it, they would not refuse to exert influence to establish me in that city. At all events, I have determined to make a trial. I should have done so before, but a foolish aversion to return to the scene of painful events restrained me. I have now no other resource; and I am fortunate in having it. I am determined to set off instantly."

"How!—to Paris? Do you think of settling there?"

"It must depend on whether I get any encouragement," replied Walter with a smile. "I shall try; but I cannot say that I shall succeed."

"But in your present state of health, you surely cannot propose undertaking a journey?"

"My health, boy!—what ails it? Do you think because I have had a fever, that I am to peak and pine henceforth for the whole course of my life? Besides, it will not be my *present* state to-morrow morning. Every day gives me new strength, and in a short time I shall be better and stronger than ever. I have been thinking over my new plan for some time past, and I have made up my mind to put it in execution without delay—that is to say, if you

will add to your long list of benefits by lending me a sum sufficient to defray my expenses until I shall have reached Paris; after which, I give you my promise never again to draw upon your bounty, until I am enabled to show my gratitude by claiming my right to your friendship by again renewing our association."

Astonishment for a moment kept Lewis from replying; and he looked up with an anxious glance to ascertain, by the countenance of the speaker, if he was serious. That was too evident, and his voice faultered as he at length replied—

"You do not surely think of leaving me here? Wherever you go, I trust I shall be permitted to share your destiny!"

"Forgive me, dear Lewis, and do not think me unkind, though I tell you that that must not be. Henceforth I must take the world in my own hands, as far as concerns my own fate. None shall longer share the fortunes of one who has nothing to offer but wayward and doubtful chances. We must part—make up your mind for that. You are now independent of misfortune. Fear not: I will crave your aid if I stand in need of it; and if not, we shall meet again, when circumstances will be better suited for enjoying each other's society."

No victim of an unjust sentence ever listened

to his doom with feelings of more horror and despair, than thrilled the heart of poor Lewis as he heard this resolution. He seized the hand of Walter within his own, which was damp and cold.—"And so you would desert me?" he exclaimed in a hoarse and broken voice. "Oh, what have I done to merit this? I, whose sole happiness has been in serving you—I, whose dearest care has been to render your life happy?"

"You wrong me, dear, gentle boy,—you wrong me. I feel the extent of your kindness—I know all your goodness; and never shall I cease to appreciate all that I owe to you. But wherefore insist on marring your own fortunes, by linking them with one whom ruin stares in the face? No, Lewis; I must live for myself. I cannot consent to subsist on the toil, or even the generosity of another, even though it were possible to find one more kind and generous than yourself. Life is now nothing to me but a necessary part of its drama, in which independence and temporal success must henceforth be the only pleasures I can enjoy in the performance. The hopes, which once lighted my prospect in futurity, are now extinguished for ever. I would fain struggle with the world's necessities, that I may forget how worthless its joys are now become to me. The struggle will now be easier since fortune and fame are no longer my

ambition. There was a time when I thirsted for glory; but I then hoped to gladden the hearts of those whose praise was dearer than my existence. That day-dream is over. The awakening was cruel, but it is past; and if the charm is broken, the vain aspiring heart has ceased to pant for a visionary destiny."

Here Walter paused, for his voice faultered, and he passed his hand across his brow to hide the emotion, which, through the deepening shades of twilight, was distinguishable in his face, when Lewis started from his seat, and flinging himself on his knees, shrieked in a voice of horror—

"Merciful Heaven! torture me not thus! Shall I—must I confess all? Yes, yes; this must not be endured. Walter Deverell! look on me—spurn me if you will. You behold before you a guilty, wretched creature!—one whose sinful love has prompted her to her own ruin and your misery. Yes! one whose guilty soul has consented to disgrace her sex, and stain her conscience with deceit! Oh, does your ear detect no accent of her who dreads to pronounce her name, lest you curse it for eternity?"

Astonishment, and a feeling almost amounting to horror, paralysed Walter's senses at this disclosure. His intellects seemed to wander, as a thousand confused ideas rushed into his mind.

"Can it be? Gracious Heavens! what means this?—do my senses deceive me?"

"Alas! no; but too long deceit and fraud has blinded your too credulous nature."

"Betsy Brown!—in the name of God! is it possible?"

"It is, indeed. Her whom you now behold is no other than that wretched and degraded being who, for her love to you, has consented to violate every feeling of honour, pride, or all of woman's nature. Hate me—spurn me—kill me! I care not—death from your hands would be too sweet a doom. Yes, Walter, I am indeed she—the unworthy object of your kindness, whom you rescued from a fate of drudgery and vice, to refine her ideas and enlighten her mind, that she might be enabled to deceive and betray you. Yes, I have deceived you. This disguise, so long and successfully maintained, proves that; I have betrayed you, too; for, lest another should retain that love which never could be mine, I have used the basest of fraud to break the bonds that linked you to one whose virtue and love had won your affection. Nay, touch me not!—do not attempt to raise me. On my knees I shall confess all—grovelling on the dust as becomes my sins. Oh, Walter, I have erred. My crimes have injured the only being I loved, or hoped to serve. You are wretched, and it is

I who have caused you to be so. Alice Russel is innocent. If she still loves you, she laments your estrangement and falsehood, as much as you have sorrowed for hers. You wrote to her, but the letters never reached their destination. I found means to intercept every one, and she remained in utter ignorance of your fate, deeming, doubtless, that you had ceased to think of her, as I hoped in time would be the case. I little knew how deeply the attachment was rooted in your heart. Alas! why did I not calculate its strength in proportion with that of my own guilty love, which defied sin and shame to baffle it. I have erred. Too late I find the evil I have done—too late do I make atonement by vain humiliation. Yes, the *friend*—the devoted companion who has served and loved you—who has watched your bed of sickness, and toiled for your sake, was no other than the guilty wretch whose soul (consuming by a hopeless passion) sought only to live and die near you, that she might gratify a devotion of which you are the idol. I ask no mercy—I plead for none. I confess all. Yes, I would rather have beheld you stretched dead before me, than have borne to think of another possessing your love. Even at the moment when I stood by your couch of agony, watching every breath that you drew, in expectation that it would be your last

—even then, in my despair, I congratulated myself to think that in dying you were *mine*—that no other was near to behold your last struggles, and catch your parting sigh, which would be breathed for me alone. Yes, I confess it; but now, when I heard you speak of your blighted hopes —when I heard you talk of the joyless future which was now before you—the consciousness that I was the fiend who had blasted these hopes, and doomed you to the eternity of joyless woe, stung me to madness. I ask not pardon. I have owned all. I merit your detestation, and I am prepared to meet it. Choose whatever vengeance you deem fit for my crime, and I will bow before the hand that inflicts it; and if that hand be yours, I will bless even the death-blow!"

"Unhappy girl!—cease to talk thus. I wish no vengeance—I feel none against you. Nay, I cannot bear this humiliation—unmeet from one of your sex to mine." And as he spoke, Walter raised her from the ground, and lifting her in his arms, forcibly placed her on the chair she had quitted. At that moment a loud knocking at the street-door, accompanied by a violent ringing of the night bell, which communicated with Walter's apartments, startled both our speakers, and put an end to further parley. The servant, who appeared in a few moments, an-

nounced the arrival of a messenger, who waited below, and wished to speak with the surgeon. As this could be no person but Walter, who was the only one bearing that title in the house, he hastened to inquire what was wanted.

Although not late, it was quite dark, and on entering the lobby, he could hardly distinguish the figure of the person who was waiting for him at the street-door.

"Is it the surgeon that I speak to, sir?" said a woman's voice, emerging from a figure, wrapped up in a large cloak and black bonnet, "case if so it be yourself, sir, I've come to ask you to visit a poor soul who is on the pint of death, at my house, in the next street; as it was yourself as so kindly attinded my poor ould countrywoman, when she got knocked down, I thought you wouldn't refuse to do a Christian act to a poor creature. But Lord love you, sir! come away, if you have charity in you, as I fear he's dead by this time, as I left him in the mortal agonies."

Walter now recognised the speaker for a poor Irish woman, whose house he had visited during his attendance on the old woman, whose unfortunate accident had procured him a patient. A few brief questions soon obtained the whole necessary information. A man, one of her lodgers, lay at the point of death. He had refused

to send for any doctor, and compassion had moved Mrs. M'Dowal, for such was the good woman's name, to apply to Walter in her own person.

"I know'd you wern't one as would stand out against assistin' a poor cretur, though they hadn't money just ready; and I'd rather undertake to pay the charges myself, than see the poor soul die, without doing anything to help him in his sufferins."

Walter could not refuse this appeal, though it was a cold frosty night, and he had not been out of his room for nearly three months. Putting on his great coat, and muffling himself well up, to keep away the cold, he hastened to accompany the poor woman, without again returning up stairs.

Mrs. M'Dowal's house was not in the "*next street*," as she stated, and Walter was well aware of that; but he made no scruple to follow his guide, through many streets, till they arrived at her residence, which was above a mile distant from where he lived.

It was one of those low lodging-houses, so common in the streets at the western part of the metropolis, where the dwellings are large and commodious, but dilapidated and gone into disuse. It was No. 1, Great Chesterfield-street, Mary-le-bone, if our reader knows such a place.

Walter knew it well; for he himself had paid for the lodging of the old woman, during the period of his professional attendance on her.

"It's up stairs, into the back attic, please your honour. The very room that poor old Mrs. Flannaghan rinted. Straight up, your honour knows the way; stop a bit and I'll fetch a candle."

Walter proceeded straight up, and reached the attic-door, before Mrs. M'Dowal, who was vociferating to some inhabitant of the kitchen to lend a candle, could follow him. He entered the apartment. A rushlight, which burned on the floor, afforded just light sufficient to show the flock-bed, which was in the further end of the room; but an audible groan, followed by a muttered curse, indicated the presence of an occupant.

"What the d—l means this disturbance, can't you let me die in peace?" growled a hoarse voice, as Walter, lifting the candle, approached the bed.

It was a curtainless tresseled couch, and its occupant raised himself on his elbow and glared defiance at the intruder. What was Walter's surprise when in that countenance, distorted by disease, he recognised the features of Archer!

"Ha! what is this?" exclaimed the sufferer, starting as he beheld Walter, on whose face the light was shed fully in view. "What do I see?

am I so near death that my brain is become confused? or is it Walter Deverell I behold?"

"It is Walter Deverell; but why do I find you thus? what is your malady? is there anything that I can do to aid you?"

"Aye, aye! you did not expect to find me here, did you? No—surely. No human being knows to tell you—what brought you here?"

"Chance. I heard that a sick man was in want of my assistance; but I had no suspicion that I was to find an old acquaintance."

"Peace! Not a word of that at present," said Archer, lowering his voice, and raising his finger to his lips, as the approaching footsteps of Mrs. M'Dowal were heard on the stairs.

"Does your honour, the surgeon, see the jintleman?" said she, opening the door; "case I've taken the liberty of bringing you a candle, and am at your service, for whatever your honour wishes."

"Thank you, my good woman, set down the light," said Walter. "I wish to have a short time's private conversation with this person. I'll call to you by-and-by."

Mrs. M'Dowal obeyed; and after she had closed the door, Walter again advanced to the bed-side.

"You are ill," said he, taking the sufferer's hand in his. "Before I can talk to you of any

other subject, I must see what can best be done for you."

"Ha, ha! so you have turned doctor, as you intended. I trust you do not claim the privilege of old acquaintance, and insist on my being your patient. No, no—I want no doctoring. I am dying, and I have made up my mind to go off quietly. Nothing now can save me—not even your skill; so peace with all such talk, and let me avail myself of the short time I have to communicate what may be of some importance to you hereafter. There, in that corner, you will find a chest. It contains a sum of money, in bank-notes, which will be a fortune to any man, who has sense to use it well. I give you credit for being that man. I intended to have placed that chest, and its contents, in your possession, but the accident of disease, which has laid me where I am, prevented me. Providence has luckily sent you hither to prevent its falling into dishonest hands; for, though I have directed the chest to you, others might have had curiosity enough to examine its contents. Look you, Walter, we have met before, but it would have gone against you then to have accepted any bounty from me. Take it now. You are safe, else I would not give it. In that chest you will likewise find papers of importance to one who was wont to be dear to you. Bah! I feel my

strength failing me. My brain seems as if it was turning round. I fear I shall not find time to say all that is necessary. It is not likely any one will dispute your claim; but if that should happen, there is a will, which shows you to be my sole heir. Stay—lift up my head, I feel suffocated—hold!"

Walter supported him, and a stream of blood flowed from the mouth of the unhappy man, which saturated the bed-clothes.

"Never mind—heed it not," exclaimed he, as soon as he had recovered strength to speak; "I am dying. This looks frightful, but I feel no pain. It is three years since I received a wound in my side. It has tortured me ever since, till now that it has brought on this internal hemorrhage, that will put an end to everything. Nothing can avail now. I am going fast. But to business; my time is brief; where is Alice Russel? You once loved her—nay, do not deny it. I discovered that secret—do you love her still?"

"Years have elapsed since we parted; but what mean these questions? Tell me, I entreat you, what is the mystery that gives you such an interest in my fate, and to whom I am indebted for such interest?"

"Walter, were I not dying, I would hesitate to answer that question. You are the only be-

ing I care for, and I should not wish you to despise me; and yet I have done no heinous sin. I was outlawed by the harsh prejudices of society, not by its better feelings. For these thirty years, I have lived the hunted victim to absurd institutions, not for any crime or transgression against virtue or morality. I have been a smuggler. There is no terror in that word;—a contraband trader, who makes no scruple to gain money without paying a heavy and useless duty to absurd laws, for his own toil. I *have* gained money, and have renounced my occupation, just in time to die. I had hoped to have enjoyed the fruits of my labours a few years in peace; but, as it is, I must content myself by being enabled to enrich the only being, whose happiness is dear to me. Yes, Walter, you are dear to me; and from that reason which endears even those who own no power, save instinct; your mother was my father's child; she and I shared the same home, during the happiest years of my existence. I loved her with all that yearning attachment which links us to the only creature that bears our blood in its veins. Her mother died at her birth. Our father did not long survive. Emma had no protector but me;—none to cherish or love her. I toiled hard to gain her bread, and I joyfully submitted to every hardship for her sake. We were poor. Poverty

is hard to bear; but the young heart feels its iron yoke with greater gallings than those who are inured to it. I could have borne to starve alone. I could have endured cold and hunger; but I could not bear to see my innocent helpless sister pine with both. I sought work, and toiled cheerfully for the humblest payment; but even that could not be always obtained. Our hovel was near the lofty mansion of Richard Deverell; and, on one occasion, when I had solicited employment in vain, I killed a hare that was on his grounds. I was instantly seized, apprehended, and, at his desire, committed to prison as a poacher. I contrived to make my escape from the prison; and, stung with shame and horror, I fled from the village, and joined the crew of a small trader, which lay at a neighbouring creek. The nature and habits of my companions were such as a more fortunate being might have shrunk from, but I was desperate. My character, already blasted, could sustain no injury; and I gladly embraced the opportunity of escaping from incarceration and disgrace. It was not until the vessel was out at sea, that I learnt my companions were smugglers. This discovery gave me little uneasiness, I must confess; but even though I had regretted it, it was too late to retract. Even though I had wished to return, I must have braved death in the attempt; for

the crew would not have consented to suffer one to desert them, who might betray their secrets. Our vessel, freighted with contraband goods, coasted to distant ports; but did not again return to England. By degrees, I became one with my new associates, and soon ceased to feel a wish or interest beyond theirs. Twelve years of a varied life passed away,—a life of perils, hardships, and danger; till, after a course of events, I became commander of the band where I had once sought succour. I returned to England. Under disguise, I visited my native village. I had none to inquire for but my sister; and to her, amid all my wanderings, my heart still yearned with affection. I learnt that she had been amply provided for during my absence; and I also learnt that she was united to the son of Richard Deverell. The last intelligence was like a thunderbolt. It seemed to blast my very soul. I tarried no longer than to hear that truth. I fled, and again became an outcast,—a rebel against the laws of my country,—a wanderer on the stormy ocean of life. I need not weary you by a fruitless attempt to detail events too varied to admit of a regular narrative. Sixteen years had elapsed before I again returned to my native village. It was then we met, and you must recollect the circumstances. It was on the same day that I first beheld you, that I had learnt the fate of

my poor sister. My blood boiled in my veins, to find her child dependent on the bounty of her murderer. Gladly would I have snatched you from his power, had I not feared to involve you in even a worse destiny, by linking you to my own. For although it was then in my power to have bestowed wealth and plenty on you, I was branded as an outcast, and I feared to imprint a like stigma on you by so doing. Do you remember our encounter at Battersea? My resolution had nearly failed me that night. I was on the point of avowing myself to you, and asking you to join our crew in the vessel, which was to depart the following day for India. I even entered your room after you were asleep, and threw aside my rude apparel, with a view to tempt your acquiescence to join me; but I hesitated,—I drew back again, fearful lest I might involve you. That same night, one of our crew was murdered by his comrades in a quarrel; that circumstance decided me. I resolved not to involve you with the fate of lawless men. We never met again. I quitted England before the following night; but some years after I returned, and, unknown to you, learnt every circumstance concerning you. The woman who kept our house at Battersea, (one Mrs. Brown) whose house you often visited, informed me of all about you. As to Alice Russel,

I know more about her than any one living can tell me. I can relate a secret, but my time is brief. She knows nothing of me. We have met, but we parted in mystery. I learnt that you loved her, as the chosen of your affection; I felt interest in her fate, and was anxious to know her character. *I* knew the secret of her birth, and the possession of that knowledge placed it in my power to learn something concerning her. I wrote privately to her, stating that it was in my power to communicate that secret to her, and for that purpose craving a private interview, as I would not otherwise reveal the circumstances. Woman's heart is always eager for mystery, and to win their confidence, you must first excite their curiosity. Even contrary to my expectations, she readily agreed to my conditions. The timid, bashful girl, who would have hesitated to trust herself, or her own judgment, in the most trifling action of everyday occurrence, consented to a clandestine and private interview with a man she never saw, and of whom or of whose intentions she knew nothing. She appointed a time when I was to call at the house, when the rest of the family were from home. Punctual to agreement, I went. It was in my power, as I had stated, to reveal the secret of her birth, although I question if the knowledge of that secret would have added to her happiness. Be

that as it may, my chief purpose was to discover the nature of her mind, and the strength of her attachment for you. For that purpose I stated (no matter with how much truth) that the secret which was in my power to reveal, though productive of good fortune to her, must entail inevitable ruin on another;—that other was Walter Deverell. I bade her choose the alternative; either to continue in total ignorance of her own origin, and resign all the advantages which its discovery must give; or, by her own aggrandizement, produce *your* downfall. Her answer was brief. I still remember it, in her own words:—

"'I question not your motives, but since these are your terms, my choice is made. Henceforth I hope I shall be permitted to remain in ignorance of a secret which must, if discovered, ruin the fortunes of one whom I prefer to all else of existence.'

"Her enthusiasm had made her forget prudence, and her confusion and blushes showed her distress at having thus openly avowed her feelings before a stranger; but she again calmly and no less resolutely refused to consent to my proposal, and declared, though in more guarded terms, her determination to remain in ignorance rather than hazard any injury to any human being. She said to *any* one; but I saw plainly

that there was *only* one for whose sake she was willing to renounce all earthly advantages.

"We parted. I did not reveal the secret; but before leaving the house I contrived to deposit a sealed packet, containing notes to the amount of one thousand pounds, on the envelope of which (directed to Alice Russel) was written, 'For her who loves Walter Deverell better than her own interests.' That sum was in fact a debt I owed her, at least I deemed it so; and I rejoiced to be able to bestow it where I trusted it would tend, though indirectly, to your benefit. A tender of the sort, or even an interview with yourself, must have necessarily led to an explanation on my part, which I was not then prepared for. I little thought that our final meeting was destined thus. But I feel death creeping on me apace. Come nearer, and sit down beside me. Yes, give me your hand. Bring the light closer, that I may look in your face. Yes, these are the features. But how is it that you are so pale and changed since I last saw you? Well, well, never mind; the best of your days are to come. I feel my strength departing. Is it not strange that *you* should be here—you, who of all others I most wished for? I would tell you many particulars; but I have not time left to do so. Give me your hand. Now speak freely, are you not

pleased at this interview? Confess the truth, my death does not give pain equivalent to the pleasure of finding yourself possessed of my wealth? Nay, be not indignant; you know I am apt to ask strange questions."

"Not more strange than the whole mystery has been and still seems to be. However I might be inclined to grieve for your death, it is beyond my power to assist you, and I implore you to explain the mystery which you allude to. What of Alice Russel? This is no time for dissimulation; years have passed since I saw her, and it is very improbable I shall ever see her more; but she was once the dearest being to my heart, and changed though she be, still continues so. What do you know of her? I implore you to divulge all, in the name of that eternity to which you are hastening."

"I have told all that I know *personally* of her; the secret of her birth, though long known to me, was, until very lately, a mere matter of suggestion. It is but a short time since I obtained absolute security for my suspicions. In that chest you will find documents that will tell you all you wish to know. Press me no further. My brain grows giddy. My ideas are fast confusing in the chaos of death. Do not leave me. I will not harm you. Promise me that you will

see the last duties done to this carcase when all is over. I hoped to have found a sailor's grave, but my heart was too much a lands-man's. I got weary of perils, storms, and strife,—strife with lawless and sometimes brutal men; but do not think mine has been a life of rapine or injustice. My chief hardships have arisen from attempts to restrain my associates from these crimes. Yes, you need not hesitate to inherit my gains; for, though perhaps unlawful, they are not the spoils of guilt. Yet our ideas of guilt may not be the same. Perhaps you are loyal enough to consider it guilt to transgress the laws of the excise, the custom-house, and all other patriotic institutions that deem it their due to exact large payments from such of the king's liege-subjects who wish to make money by trading in foreign goods. If so, you must be allowed to take your own opinion as to the disposal of the money; but I fear you will find some difficulty in deciding on the rightful owners. I wish to ask you many questions concerning your fate and fortunes since we parted; but it is hardly worth while to satisfy a curiosity which must so soon terminate. Yet it would seem as if life was stronger in me than it was before I saw you. Not an hour ago I thought I had but a few minutes to live, and you see I have

contrived to spin a long yarn since you came in. By Jove! I begin almost to hope that it is not over with me yet. Just raise me up, and I'll try if I can't look round me. You say you are a surgeon, but I have no trust in doctors' skill. Three years ago I got wounded by the explosion of a rifle; it was accident, but I had almost thought I was done for. It has proved too much for me ever since; and though I have weathered several rough voyages, I never was myself again; and, finally, I gave up the helm, as I found it was too much for me to endure the toils of our wandering life; but just as I reached port, I was run aground here. I begin to see some hope now. Oh yes; I'll get round again. There, right, support me. Let me lean my head on your shoulder. Oh, to be sure, I begin to feel like myself again. I'll be able by-and-by to tell you all about it. I'll tell you all the secret cause that made me feel an interest in you. I had a sister,—you are her child. It is a long story, but presently I'll be able to relate it. She was my only sister. Our parents died young. Surely I had told you that, and all about Richard Deverell—ha! so I did. He was a proud remorseless tyrant. He made me an outcast, but my sister wedded his son—Ha! I had told you that too. Help, hold me; I am falling, I am

sinking. Walter Deverell! no, not *Deverell*, I cursed that name. Walter, my sister's child, help me, hold me, I am sinking; mercy——"

Walter supported the unfortunate sufferer; but, though his strength sustained the sinking frame, nothing could stay the fleeting spirit. One convulsive struggle, a long hollow groan, and all was over. His arms held a lifeless corpse.

CHAPTER XII.

During the course of his life, short as it had yet been, Walter had endured much that was calculated to render him less susceptible to emotion; but feelings long dormant in his heart were awakened by this scene. As he bent over the lifeless clay which now was extended mute and motionless before him, his spirit was stirred by the ties of kindred, too briefly attested, and too lately claimed, by the unfortunate being who could never again claim aught of earthly rights. There is a respect, almost holy, with which we regard the dead. Death levels all distinctions, soothes all enmities, and renders the slightest bond of affection more firm and sacred in the heart of the survivor.

To Walter, who stood alone in the world, the death of one who claimed kindred to him, was as the breaking of a tie which linked him to existence. Yet it is doubtful whether, had this newly-discovered relative lived to maintain his claims, those claims would have been received with so much respect or regard. Archer, or Morely, (for we must call him by his real name)

was a strange and unpolished being. He had led a hazardous and outcast life, and though his feelings were good, they were lost in the rough habits and repulsive manners which his mode of life had rendered inseparable from his nature. Had he lived, his nearly allied relationship might not have been so sacred to the mind of Walter; but, as it was, we have no right to question the feelings of regret, amounting to the keenest of sorrow, with which he gazed on the lifeless corpse of the only being, who, to him, had claimed kindred with her who gave him birth—with her whose fond maternal affection still lived in his memory, too briefly beloved, and too bitterly regretted. For the first time he now remembered having heard his mother speak of a brother she once had; but it was like the indistinct recollection of a dream. He remembered that she wept at the time, but she wept often, and, until now, the circumstance had never recurred to his thoughts. He took the chill and motionless hand within his, and holding the dim and flickering light closer to the face of the corse, he gazed intently on the features. The rigidity of death had begun to give a harsher expression to the hard lines and rugged brow of the departed; yet, even in these unsightly lineaments, Walter traced, or fancied he could trace, a resemblance to his mother. It

must have been fancy; for the unfortunate wife of Walter Deverell was as lovely as humanity could be formed, and the weather-beaten, rugged features of her brother were repulsive with harshness. Yet he was her brother—he had loved her, cherished her and her friendless orphan son; and Walter felt, with bitter regret, that it was not in his power to acknowledge the justice of these claims on his love and gratitude.

John Morely, for such was the name of the deceased, was a strange and untutored being. He died as he had lived—guided by chance, and utterly regardless of all that was due to himself or to society. The wretched apartment in which he took up his final abode, was a proof of his indifference to his own comfort or safety. Possessed as he was of wealth, sufficient to have procured every indulgence or care necessary to his weak and dying state, he contented himself by taking refuge in a sorry lodging, to which necessity had, on former occasions, compelled him to resort. Content with his condition, he had there resigned himself to death, which he saw was inevitable; and, had it not been for the mere chance of Walter's being called to his aid, he would have perished without using an exertion to communicate all that pressed so heavily on his mind, or securing the property which he left behind him, from becoming the prey of those

who chose to appropriate it. A small chest loosely corded, and a few articles of worthless apparel, constituted the whole of the decorations of the apartment, which with the exception of the wretched truckle-bed, was wholly destitute of furniture. A card fixed between the cording of the trunk, bore the address of "Walter Deverell, at West Hall, Devonshire; to be forwarded instantly after my death." How far the order might have been executed, cannot now be ascertained; but it may be judged from the habits of the persons to whom it was to have been entrusted, and the valuable nature of the contents of the chest, which remains to be detailed to our readers. We do not assert that our hero felt *no* impatience to examine them; but whatever might have been his anxiety to do so, the time and place prevented his feeling any inclination to satisfy his curiosity at that moment. He summoned the woman of the house, whom he informed of the death of her lodger; and gave orders that every necessary attention should be performed to the deceased, promising to remunerate her for all expense and trouble.

"Ay, and sure enough, it's for yourself alone, I'd take any manner of pains, without caring a straw for payment," replied Mrs. M'Dowal, with energy; "and all for the sake of your merciful kindness to the poor ould cretur, Mrs.

Flannaghan, who lives to pray blessings on you for that same; bating all that I'd do for the poor fellow himself there, where he lies. God rest his soul! it's many a year agone since he first took lodgings here; and an honest lodger and good payer too, he has always been, Heaven be merciful to him for that same—though I sometimes wondered where he came by his money. It was jist this morning, sir, he gave me a purse an old shabby leather one, but ten golden sovereigns were in it, and he tould me it was to pay for his funeral, and I mustn't give any more expense for it. But by-the-by, ye're honour, the reason that made me most eager to bring you here was becase he talked such a mighty deal about a box. That one that stands there, which he made me promise, over and over again, to send, after he was dead, to some place or other, I forget where he said, and I can't read; but he told me it was written on the lid, and if yere honour would only be so kind as take charge of it, it would take a great weight off my mind, as I know you'd be sure to see that all was done as it should be."

"I know the person to whom this is directed," said Walter, looking at the chest; "and if you please, I will take it with me, and promise you to place it in the hands of the owner."

"Thousands of thanks, though I didn't tell

you it was that made me fetch y're honour; for I saw the poor soul had something on his mind, and I knew nobody so good that I could trust to; and nobody that I could be sure would see it in safe hands."

This was a fortunate opinion for Walter, who might otherwise have found some difficulty in establishing his claim, under the present circumstances; and after giving such directions as were necessary to the good woman, he dispatched a messenger for a hackney-coach, in which he placed himself and his yet unexamined property, and drove home to his own lodgings.

It was late when he arrived, about eleven o'clock; and his feelings, over-excited and agitated by the scene he had witnessed, were rendered even more so as he contemplated the meeting with one, from whom he had so recently listened to even a more astonishing disclosure. Lewis, the companion of so many years, as what did he, must he, now regard that being who had undergone such an unlooked-for change of character and sex? The discovery had caused such a sudden revulsion in his ideas, that during the short space which had elapsed, he began to look back to it as a dream. Until now he had not been left for a moment unoccupied to reflect on it. Other thoughts, other events, as strange and impressive, had filled his mind; and now for the

first time, on his homeward way, he recurred to the scene which had taken place before he quitted his lodgings. His heart beat with almost audible violence, as he entered the house; and he proceeded up stairs, half doubting whether his brain had not been bewildered by some frenzied vision, or if truth would be verified by his waking senses. He entered the apartment where he had left his companion,—it was vacant; he hastened into the next,—it was equally so. He opened the closet adjoining which *she* had wont to occupy; all was silent,—but a candle which stood lighted on the table, showed that some person had recently quitted the apartment. A letter lay on the table. Walter eagerly seized it. The seal was yet warm. The address was to himself. With a trembling hand he hastily tore it open, and read as follows:—

"Farewell, Walter Deverell! You, whom I have loved better than my hopes on earth, or my dreams of eternity, farewell for ever! I have erred—blind frantic passion urged me. I loved you; methinks I can see the scornful smile curl your lip at this confession—loved! presumptuous being! What had a low degraded wretch like me to do with love? And love for such as you, whom rank, wealth, and all of earthly rights had placed so far above me? Yet

pause, ere you judge so proudly. Wherefore did you turn aside from your path of honour and distinction, to care for such as I was? When the wheels of your carriage crushed me to the earth, was it not enough to bear the mangled wretch to a place of safety, and pay for such aid as would restore her to the power of again mingling with her degraded associates, or toiling for the bread which she must have earned to sustain her existence? But no; you had dreams of philanthropy, beyond mere compassion for the writhings of bodily pain. You pitied my darkened and misguided mind. You sought to let in the lights of knowledge, and the precepts of virtue on a soul, debarred and sunk below the hopes of either. When you taught me to love knowledge, do you wonder that I loved yourself, you, who were all I ever knew of knowledge? When you laboured to impart the precepts of virtue to my heart, can you blame it for loving one who was virtue's self? I do not blame you; but I would fain exculpate myself in this last appeal to your mercy. Oh, think! you had many friends; but I was friendless. You mingled with those who were kind and dear, and forgot the humble and degraded wretch on whom you bestowed the only beam of hope that cheered her misery. I had none else to think on—none else to love. Scorned and harshly treated by

every other being save yourself, am I to be blamed because I loved you beyond all else? Ay, even beyond my visions of futurity, of which I knew nought but what you had taught me?

"Yet you will say I acted basely; for I deceived you, and sought to deprive you of another's love, merely because you loved not me. This accusation is too just, therefore I cannot attempt to excuse myself; but ere revenge rises in your breast, and inspires you with hatred against me, pause! Contemplate my future fate. Compare it with your own,—pity me, and triumph.

"Go, seek out her you love,—her who has been the adored idol of your soul amid change, trials, and anguish. If she loves you but half as I have done, she will not hesitate to listen to your explanation, and renew her affection, and pledge again her vows. Tell her of my treachery. I have confessed it, and again confess it. I alone have been the cause of your estrangement from her. Tell her the means which I resorted to. Tell her that deceit could alone have caused the seeming unkindness which has been on your part, as you loved her unchanged, and with faith, beyond earthly love. Yes, I attest that truth,—*I*, who have witnessed the power of your faith unchanging, even in the imagined hour of death. Yes, go to her, tell her all,—she will

love you, and you will again be happy. You will be blest with all that Heaven awards to those who deserve such blessings; and then, surely, amid your felicity, you will pardon the wretch who no longer can mar it; who, sunk in remorse and misery, lives but to solicit Heaven for your sake. Yes, Walter, you will,—you must pardon me. Think on all my love; no, no, not my *love*. Think on me as that humble friend and servant, whose character I have so long held in your eyes. The friend who stood by you amid want and woe; whose sole hope and joy was to serve and love you. *Love!* Ha! there again,—what a strange incongruity of feeling arises with that word. It recals to this soul the tumultuous passions which have so often agitated it, when you were wont to grasp my hand and call me your dear friend. Your *friend!* your slave! ha! ha! little did you think that under the disguise was concealed a woman's form, a woman's heart, that throbbed and glowed with unextinguishable passion.

"But I forget my resolves. This letter was merely intended for a farewell, and its first words might have sufficed, Farewell for ever! but forgive me, it is the last time I shall intrude on your thoughts—save in memory. We meet no more. I need not tell you to refrain from any attempt to discover my retreat, for I am not

vain enough to think you will attempt any. I can support, by my own exertions, an existence which must henceforth be devoted to remorse and penance. My only happiness must be in prayers for yours. "ELIZABETH."

Various and conflicting were the emotions with which Walter perused this letter; but the chief and first idea, was an anxious and impetuous desire to recal the writer.

"Is she gone? whither? where shall I seek her?" exclaimed he, wildly, as he looked round the apartment in a momentary confusion of despair.

Instant pursuit was his impulse; but where? He hastened down stairs, but to his eager inquiries, he could only learn that "the young *gentleman*" had quitted the house, in a hackney-coach, about an hour before his return. Further no one could tell, as he had left no message, and no person had seen the direction in which the coach went. He had taken one small trunk, and his box of drawings with him, as one of the servants had helped to place them in the coach; but that was all that could be learned.

Our hero was no better for this information. It was evident that the object of his search was gone; but the question was, where? or in what direction was he to shape his course to overtake her?

"Take my word, sir," said the servant maid, who had followed him to the door, while he put on his great-coat, and stood behind him, as he paused on the outer step, considering what direction to take. "Take my word, sir, it's of no use. Bless you! one might as well look for a needle in a bundle of hay, as run after any one in the streets of London. Besides you don't know which way the coach went, and you may, for aught you know, take the contrary direction. I assure you it's no use thinking of it."

This was a disheartening assurance, and the truth of the argument rendered it more so. Walter hesitated, and reflected whether it would not be as well to take the advice given, as to make a hap-hazard search through the streets of London, at that late hour. At that moment, as he stood debating with himself, a carriage drove rapidly into the street, and stopping at the door, the footman, alighting from the box, requested to know if Mr. Crawford, the surgeon, lived there.

Mr. Crawford was Walter's assumed name, and, therefore, he replied in the affirmative.

"Ah! That's lucky,—you are the person I want," replied the man, abruptly. "You are wanted instantly to attend his lordship. He has been seized with another attack since you were there last, and is on the point of death."

"This must be some mistake," replied Walter. "I do not know to whom you allude."

"No matter. You are Mr. Crawford, you say, and that is the gentleman we were told to go for. There's no mistake, I assure you; and if there is—no matter; you will do as well as any other; for ten to one all will be over before we get back. May I trouble you to step into the carriage? This way, sir. I assure you, Mr. Crawford was the name, and we have delayed too long already."

With these words the man opened the door of the coach, and let down the steps with the utmost expedition.

Walter had, fortunately, his case of surgical instruments in his pocket. He had no right to ask further questions under such circumstances. The name he had assumed certainly was Mr. Crawford; and as such he was bound to go wherever his professional duties might summon him. Without further parley, therefore, he sprang into the carriage. The door was closed. The footman remounted the box, and the horses drove off at full gallop.

It may be as well to explain to our readers the mistake which caused this event, although it was not explained till some time after to our hero. In Fitzroy-square, in the same number of the house as Walter occupied in Fitzroy-

street, lived one Dr. Crawford, one of the most eminent of the faculty. The similarity of all these circumstances gave rise to the mistake of the messengers, who were dispatched in great haste, without minute directions. Whether *any* patient would have lost much between the comparative skill of our hero, and his more famous namesake, we cannot presume to say; but in this present case human skill availed nothing.

After a rapid drive the carriage stopped before a house in Cavendish-square, and, on alighting, Walter was conducted up the lofty stair-case, and ushered, without ceremony, into the sick-chamber.

The sudden glare of light which dazzled his eyes as he entered the apartment, made him pause for a moment as he looked around. The light proceeded from several lamps placed on a table which stood close by the side of a bed. Round this table were seated three men, apparently notaries, as they were busied with a mass of papers which lay before them. One of them was writing when Walter entered. On the bed, supported by pillows, lay a form whose ghastly visage and death-like features left no doubt that he was the sufferer to whose aid Walter had been summoned, though, at the first glance, it was too evident that all aid was in vain. The light shone full on the face of the sufferer.

He was partly raised up, and leaning forward with an anxious eagerness which was fearfully marked on his death-sharpened features, as he was dictating in a broken, hollow voice, to the person who was writing. Walter drew near the bed. One of the attendants motioned him to approach the invalid. He would have spoken; he would have proceeded to inquire what aid was sought for, where all was fruitless; but an object met his glance which overwhelmed every idea with emotion. At the other side of the bed, half concealed by the drapery of the curtains, stood a female form. Her face was averted. Her long hair, which had fallen over her face, shaded it as she bent close to the sufferer, who held her hand in his; but she looked up, and her glance met Walter's. It was Alice Russel. It was the glance of recognition. She beheld the form of her early love. What woman fails to recognise him she loves? but no sign of emotion varied her pale features—paler than death. The hurried glance of her sad, dark eye, seemed to say, "Is it thus we meet?" No expression on her face seemed to invite him to address her, but seemed rather to forbid his approach. Yet could he blame her? Was this a scene to admit of aught beyond the all-absorbing cares of death? Her hand was clasped in the hand of a dying man, and she was eagerly

listening to accents soon to be hushed for ever. Yet Walter was impelled to approach her. A moment he hesitated. He felt impelled to spring forward, and, regardless of all present, throw himself at the feet of her he loved.

"Stand back, young gentleman," said the notary in a sharp, imperative tone—"You see your assistance is of no use; do not interrupt our business.—Shall we proceed, my lord?"

Thus checked, Walter drew back; yet he remained in the apartment. Indeed, had he wished to quit this most extraordinary scene, he must have been at a loss how to proceed; for the attendant having left the room after ushering him in, none were present except the abrupt notary and his assistants, the dying man, and that *one* being whose presence would have bound him to the spot.

Again the tremulous voice of the sufferer resumed a narration which Walter's entrance had interrupted.

"In a moment. Let me gain breath. Yes. Where was I? Did any one come in? Do not leave me, Alice. Now, silence—proceed, That I declare, as my daughter, Lady Charlotte Astley, did basely and clandestinely elope from my protection, and unite herself to a low-born fortune-hunter, without my consent or sanction, that I disinherit her; and by this, my last

will, declare that she is not to heir any part of my property, real or personal, with the exception of an annuity of one hundred pounds, which she holds by right of her mother. But further, I have a statement to make which weighs heavily on my conscience. I had intended to have died unconfessed, had not the ingratitude of my daughter rendered me indifferent to her welfare, which must now suffer in this declaration.—Stay, fold and seal the will—hand it to me, that I may first sign it. I have a few words to add, which I wish to put in my own hand, as to the disposal of my property. Alice, give me a glass of water. Reach it from the side-table there; put a few drops of laudanum in it."

"My lord," replied Alice, in a low but firm voice, "I will not leave you. Pause, I implore you, before you sign a deed that, if time were granted, you would bitterly repent. Retract your decree while it is yet in your power. Lady Charlotte has erred; but she is your child—as such forgive her, as you hope to be forgiven."

Walter felt his heart thrill with emotion as he listened to that well-known voice. Instinctively he drew nearer, his eyes riveted on that form which seemed like a vision of bygone days. The sharp, broken voice of the Earl, in reply, sounded on his ear, and broke the spell which,

for a moment, had caused all present to be forgotten in her alone.

"As I hope to be forgiven! Ha! ha! you give a poor reason for your argument; but my time is brief. Do not interrupt me. I have a tale to tell. It weighs heavy on my conscience. It will surprise many. Charlotte Astley is a *bastard*. She has debased herself by her own conduct, therefore I need not hesitate to avow a stigma which can no longer degrade her. Seven-and-twenty years ago, when abroad on a mission of government to Constantinople, I united myself to a Turkish girl of high birth. Our union was private, for her relatives would have rather sacrificed both than allowed her to wed an Infidel. But they suspected it; and on the very day of our marriage, my bride was forcibly removed from my sight and taken to some remote place of confinement, which baffled all my searching inquiries to discover. I was compelled to return to England without obtaining any intelligence concerning her fate. I deplored her loss, for I concluded that she had been sacrificed to the wrath of her relatives. Distance and change of scene softened my regret, and after a lapse of more than a year, I united myself to an English lady, whose alliance was strongly urged by my friends. By her interest I was appointed Gover-

nor of Trinidad, where I went to reside, and continued permanently until a few years ago. By this second marriage, I had several children; and five years of uninterrupted good fortune and connubial peace elapsed, without anything occurring to disturb my conscience with regard to my former union, which was a secret to all but myself. Time was awaiting me. It was in the year ——, business caused me to undertake a voyage to Spain, and on passing through the Bay of Biscay, our vessel was hailed by a small boat in distress containing three individuals, whom, with much difficulty, we succeeded in rescuing from their perilous situation, and took on board two sailors and a female; the latter, who was nearly insensible from cold and fatigue, was at my request carried into the cabin which I occupied, when, beholding her, I recognised Zulmia Alverez—my wife. My amazement at this unexpected meeting, was only equalled by her delight when, on recovering, she found her husband bending over her. Never shall I forget the passionate exclamations of joy, with which, in her own melodious language, she expressed her ecstacy at such unlooked-for happiness, little dreaming that he whom she believed eternally united to her by every bond of faith and love, was the husband of another. What heart could have summoned courage to have told her that

truth! And even though I had done so, innocent and guileless as she was, an utter stranger to our customs or feelings, she could not have estimated the reality of her situation. Luckily none present but myself knew the Turkish language, and Zulmia could speak no other. I represented her as a former friend to those around me, while to herself I acknowledged her claims on me. She related her adventures since we parted—I forget the particulars—they bore little impression on my mind:—Years of captivity and harsh treatment from her relatives, a hazardous escape, a departure for England in search of me, a shipwreck, which ended in the rescue that led to our meeting.

"Poor Zulmia, she was in raptures at her good fortune. I should have been no less rejoiced, for I loved her sincerely, but the new ties I had formed since our separation, rendered her claims somewhat awkward. Yet could I confess the truth to her? She was young, beautiful, and loving. I was all to her; she had sought me amid perils and uncertainty. Could I refuse to give her the protection and love she sought from him for whom she had braved so much? Oh, no. Young and lovely as she was, a colder heart than mine must have loved her. Yet I acted the part of a villain. She accompanied me to ———, where we lived together for

nearly twelvemonths. I had no acquaintances there, and business gave me a plausible excuse for my absence from home. Were I to say I *loved* Zulmia, I should profane that sacred passion; that she loved me was too dearly proved by her disinterested devotion. She had left all else for me, and regarded me as her sole happiness in existence. It was enough that I smiled on her, that I was near her, that she could live in my presence. It was all she craved, and all that was granted her. What man is insensible to beauty! Hers was surpassing mortal loveliness; but where honour and virtue do not govern and maintain affection, it soon palls when it is founded on mere admiration of outward charms. But mine was checked by other causes. I trembled for the discovery of a secret, which must involve me in shame, perplexity, and ruin. Other affections, too, that were not less dear, must be sacrificed. I had children, two sons; they were infants, but I loved them. A father who loves his offspring, must tremble at the thought of entailing disgrace on them. By declaring my marriage with Zulmia, I must bastardize them. The time was now approaching when I could no longer delay my return to India. Once I thought of deceiving Zulmia and departing unknown to her; but it was impossible. Either she had some fear of my inten-

tions, or some secret presentiment made her dread losing sight of me, for she kept such close watch that I found it impracticable. Besides, another plan occurred to me. Zulmia informed me that in the wreck of the vessel (a small smuggling craft) in which she left Turkey, she had lost the trunk containing many of her valuables, and among other things, the certificate of her marriage with myself, which she had kept with great care, since our separation. This information gave rise to a plot which I lost no time of putting in execution. During the period of our courtship, the intercourse of Zulmia and myself was of that romantic nature which her eastern manners, and my boyish passion, had dictated. I had wooed her under the assumed name of Alphonzo. As such she only knew me; and, preferring the name of her early love, she never called me by any other. But our marriage was celebrated by a christian priest, in Constantinople; and the certificate, was, at my desire, made out in my real name. It was now lost; Zulmia, who did not know the language, could not have read it, therefore she could not even verbally produce her claim. I need not dwell on minute circumstances. I learnt, by corresponding with my agent in London, the exact date on which a vessel was to leave that place for Trinidad; and having ascertained that, I

made my previous arrangements. Utterly unconscious of the fate which awaited her, Zulmia gladly agreed to my proposal of accompanying me to London, where we arrived on the day appointed for the vessel (which I had enquired for) leaving the India docks. My passage was already taken; now or never was the time for the completion of my scheme. If I felt any compunction, it was overpowered by stronger feelings. Zulmia was about to become a mother. The unborn babe might have moved me to pity, if I had paused to think; but I had other children. They were dear to me, and I must disunite myself from her, or sacrifice them. I do not know if I reasoned thus at the time; but I have since striven to overcome the pangs of remorse, by that argument. On the same night of our arrival in London, I took a lodging for her. I forget the street, but I remember it was situated somewhere in the western part of the metropolis.

"There I left her, under the pretext of business which was not to detain me. I never returned, but embarked instantly, and the vessel set sail with that night's tide. I never heard aught of her fate. I never enquired. I remember she had valuable jewels, and therefore I judge she could not have suffered from want. I returned to India; during the solitude of my

voyage, I contrived to stifle all useless regrets; and, once more surrounded by my children, I soon learnt to regard myself as fortunate in having got rid of an encumbrance, which must have branded me with disgrace, and stigmatized them with shame. They are dead! All *dead*. I lived to see the son, for whose sake I sacrificed my peace in this world and my salvation in the next, dashed to pieces before my sight. His mangled limbs lay extended before me, a token of Heaven's vengeance for my crime. Yes, they are all dead. One by one, my children sunk to the grave, as if blasted by the curse of hell. No, no, it was the curse of the innocent—the curse of Zulmia. The wrath of Heaven avenged her wrongs, and those of her unborn babe. She must have died; and dying, she had cursed the wretch who basely abandoned her. Her curse has fallen on me—ay, and the curses of my child; for if it lived to see the light, it must have wept for Heaven's vengeance on its unnatural father!"

"Father — father—your child lives! lives to bless you!" exclaimed Alice, in a tone of wild and piercing energy that thrilled every heart. "Look on me—I am your child; the child of Zulmia Alverez—she who loved you to the last moment of agony which stretched her in death, and gave birth to her infant. Look

on me, father. I am your daughter. Acknowledge me, and bless me."

"You—you! What means this?" exclaimed the earl, in wild and hurried accents. "What do I hear? Who spoke of my child? *You* are not my child. No, no,—you are mocking me. Avaunt! cruel spirit. My child is dead. I have sought for it in vain. Zulmia must have died, her heart must have broken—her infant could not have survived her. Pale, frantic girl; what, would *you* deceive me? Your name is Alice Russel. You have been kind to me. You are the only being who has stood by me in my agony. You cannot be my child."

"Hear me, father, for mercy's sake—too late, do not refuse to hear me. I am your child. The tale you have disclosed, proves all that till now was a mystery. At the period you speak of, and under the circumstances you have related, I entered the world; my mother expired at the moment of giving me birth. The description you give of her; the tale of your desertion, all proves it; but those whose humanity watched her last sufferings, and cherished my infancy, can better tell the tale which I cannot relate. Yet, stay. Was there no pledge, was there nothing that belonged to your unfortunate Zulmia, that you could identify? Does this hold no place in your memory?" and, as she spoke,

Alice hastily snatched from her bosom a small amulet, studded with gems, which she always wore concealed. The earl took it slowly; he held it between him and the light; his hand trembled, and a paleness, even more ghastly, overspread his features.

"It is hers!—the amulet she wore. She had it round her neck when we parted. Father of heaven! do I then behold my child? Ha! could I doubt thee? Now I see the cause that my nature yearns towards thee, Alice. Ha! they called thee Alice. Stand near me, that I may look on thee. Yes; these are her features. The resemblance smote me when I first beheld thee. Ay, even with a feeling of dread. Had not chance thrown you in my way, I should have shunned you. Vile, coward wretch; the same motive that prompted me to desert your mother, would have made me wish to avoid recognising my child. But she for whom I feared,—she has deserted me. You alone have stood near me. Nature must have prompted you;—but I am dying. Have I lived to behold my child? Alice! No, no—who called thee Alice? Zulmia—stand near me—ha! there are others too—witnesses of this first and last meeting of a father and his child! Write—sign—tell all—prove all, for I am dying; but there are proofs—give them. Charlotte Astley—she

has erred; yet she is punished too bitterly—but it was justice. My child—nay, Alice—I must call thee Alice; where are you?—my sight grows dim. Oh, were time granted me, I would atone for the wrong I have done thee. Poor Charlotte! Yet you will not triumph over her. You will be her friend; pray for me—tell all—it must be told; do not spare me, but pity her. My brain is wandering—this is a vision. Who spoke of my child? of Zulmia's child? It is dead; where, where,—Alice! she is my child, Alice! Do not leave me—fiends are around me—hellish voices talk of my child. They tell me *you* are she. No, no, you are my only friend. She died cursing me; curses—ha! they burn in my soul—they drag me down, down. Help! mercy! I sink! I am lost!" And the eyes of the wretched sufferer glared wildly around, as he shrieked rather than uttered these words. They were his last. The strained and wandering orbs became fixed in their sockets, with a fearful glassy glare. The stretched and sharpened features relaxed. The jaw fell. Foam oozed over the convulsed lip; a rattling sound, a hollow groan, and all was over.

All present thronged round the bed. Pale and transfixed to the spot, stood she whose scarcely attested claims were dissolved in death. With clasped hands and eyes fixed on the life-

less corpse of her *father*, Alice stood mute and motionless. No tear started to those wide-extended orbs, which gazed in moveless horror. No shriek escaped her pale and parted lips. So sudden and brief had the whole passed before her mind, that she felt as if entranced by some fearful dream. In a few moments all was a scene of confusion. The hastily summoned attendants crowded with fruitless bustle to offer aid where all was unavailing. One form approached her; she felt the pressure of a protecting arm, which, encircling her waist, would have withdrawn her from the scene of horror. She heard a voice, well-known, pronounce her name. She heard no more. Sight, sense, and feeling forsook her; she fell, and was borne lifeless from the apartment in the arms of Walter.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

The title of this Chapter will show those who may not have cared to read our narrative, that it is now ended. To those who have felt any interest in the fate of our hero and heroine, we think it requisite to add a few words with regard to the relative positions in which we leave those characters who have formed the *dramatis personæ* of this tale, before the curtain closes over their fates for ever.

Our reader need not fear that we intend to weary his patience by minute details which consist of little else than a repetition of events already related; neither do we intend to lengthen out our narrative by giving histories of each individual who has been introduced during the course of its relation. We shall not attempt to portray the feelings of Lady Charlotte Astley, on the event of her receiving the news of her father's death, and the loss of her fortune, which, by right of will and deed, belonged to the *eldest* child of the Earl of Dartmore. Neither do we think it necessary to follow her wayward fortunes, or give

account of the various changes, which may be naturally expected were her fate, during the course of her married life with an Irish fortune-hunter, to whom she had united herself, when she quitted her father's house in the manner already described. It would also be of little use to introduce Lady Georgina again in her altered position; and it is sufficient to say, that Walter was introduced to the bride of Mr. James Sharpquill, in whom he recognised an old acquaintance, namely, the quondam governess of the Misses Simkin, whose adventure with our hero may perhaps be recollected; but as a recognition was by no means necessary, Walter did not claim acquaintance, neither did he attempt to undeceive Mr. James with respect to the lady's fortune, a mistake which was soon discovered without his assistance.

With regard to Richard Deverell, he certainly kept good his word, in never again receiving his disobedient grandson; but whether he might not have relented, if time had been granted him, it is impossible to say, as he died before it was in Walter's power to solicit his forgiveness. He died intestate; therefore, the whole of the property devolved on our hero.

Perhaps, having gone thus far, our reader might be able to fancy the result as well as we can relate it.

It is true the conclusion of our last chapter was by no means satisfactory, as our heroine fell lifeless into the arms of her lover; but it was only a swoon, and it must be conceived she recovered, and as her lover was beside her, it must be supposed that she did not want for every soothing care and kindness that affection can bestow. What is there then to relate? It is superfluous to say, what every one must be aware of, that the reunited lovers hastened to detail to each other all that had passed during their long separation; or that Walter did not fail to explain the cause of his seeming neglect, and their consequent estrangement; that Alice listened with emotion, and found no difficulty in forgiving the seeming error, so frankly and fully explained by one, whose very errors were dearer to her than the virtues of any other human being.

All this may be easily conceived; but as we have undertaken the task of this narrative, it is as well to complete it.

The proofs which were produced were more than sufficient to establish the fact of Alice's birthright, which was settled with little trouble, and as little exposure of facts as possible, that they might not tarnish the memory of the dead. With regard to the chest, bequeathed to our hero by his unfortunate relative, John Morely, its contents, although neither inexhaustible nor

marvellous, were of value sufficient to render the possessor independent and wealthy; but one article in the chest gave more pleasure than even the wealth it contained, namely, the marriage certificate of the unfortunate mother of Alice with the Earl of Dartmore, which had fallen into the hands of the adventurous smuggler, only a short time before his death. Archer, or Morely, as we must now call him, was captain of the vessel in which poor Zulmia escaped out of Turkey, from the wreck of which he had contrived to save a few things of value, and among others a casket, belonging to the unfortunate lady, which contained a few jewels, her marriage certificate, and a sum of money. The money and jewels he converted to his own immediate use; but the certificate he preserved, partly with a view of restoring it in case of an opportunity, and partly by that accident by which things are retained, though of no apparent use, merely because there is no motive for destroying them. It was mislaid among a mass of heterogeneous rubbish, which may be supposed to have accumulated during the course of years, in the possession of one so eccentric and unsettled, until having heard (by some means which we cannot ascertain) the history of Alice's birth, he contrived to trace a connexion between that event, and many circumstances which had come to his knowledge; and

he, therefore, after a diligent search, again possessed himself of the certificate, which came into our hero's possession in the manner already mentioned.

What now remains to be told? Can it be for a moment doubtful that the kind-hearted Mrs. Russel found a home, and a happy dwelling, with her whose childhood she had fostered with more than a mother's kindness, and who now rewarded her with more than a daughter's love? Even Miss Vickery was not forgotten, who, when receiving the hospitable welcome of Alice, forgot many faults and errors which she was wont to mark, with perchance too much severity. Time had perhaps improved our heroine, for these faults were no longer discernible even to the scrutinising eye of her *aunt;* nor was the latter ever again heard to animadvert on the folly of her sister's protecting and cherishing the orphan whom chance had thrown on her bounty.

But there is one whose fate may probably excite an interest in the hearts of those who pity, though they may condemn her, the devoted and unhappy Betsy Brown; but, alas! her fate must remain involved in that mystery which shrouded it, and rendered fruitless the anxious inquiries of those who left no effort untried to discover her retreat, or to ascertain if she still held a place in the land of the living.

Shall we now say, in the language of romance writers, that, "no longer deterred by cruel fate, our hero and heroine were united in those bonds of bliss which Heaven alone can sever?" or shall we say plainly, "They were married?" We leave it to the decision of our reader, who may choose which of these terms best pleases her or his taste; and to those who have felt an interest in the hero and heroine of this humble tale, we can return no better thanks than wishing them a fate as happy.

THE END.

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